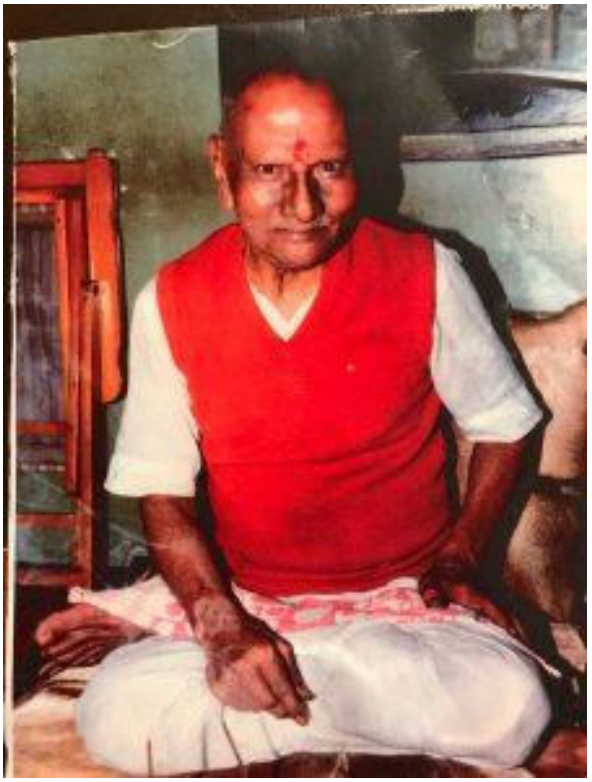
Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar



Sri NisargadattaMaharaj and His Teachings

Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar

Sri NisargadattaMaharaj and His Teachings

Compiled by

Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar

formerly:

(i) Professor, Dept. of Mechanical Engineering,

St. Joseph Engineering College,

Vamanjoor, Mangalore – 575 028, India

(ii) Principal, Vivekananda College of Engineering and Technology,

Puttur (D.K.) – 574 203, India(iii) Head, Dept. of Mechanical Engineering,

Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues Institute of Technology,

Vashi, Navi Mumbai 400 703, India

(iv) Senior Scientific Officer and Head,

Cryogenics Section,

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Trombay, Mumbai, India

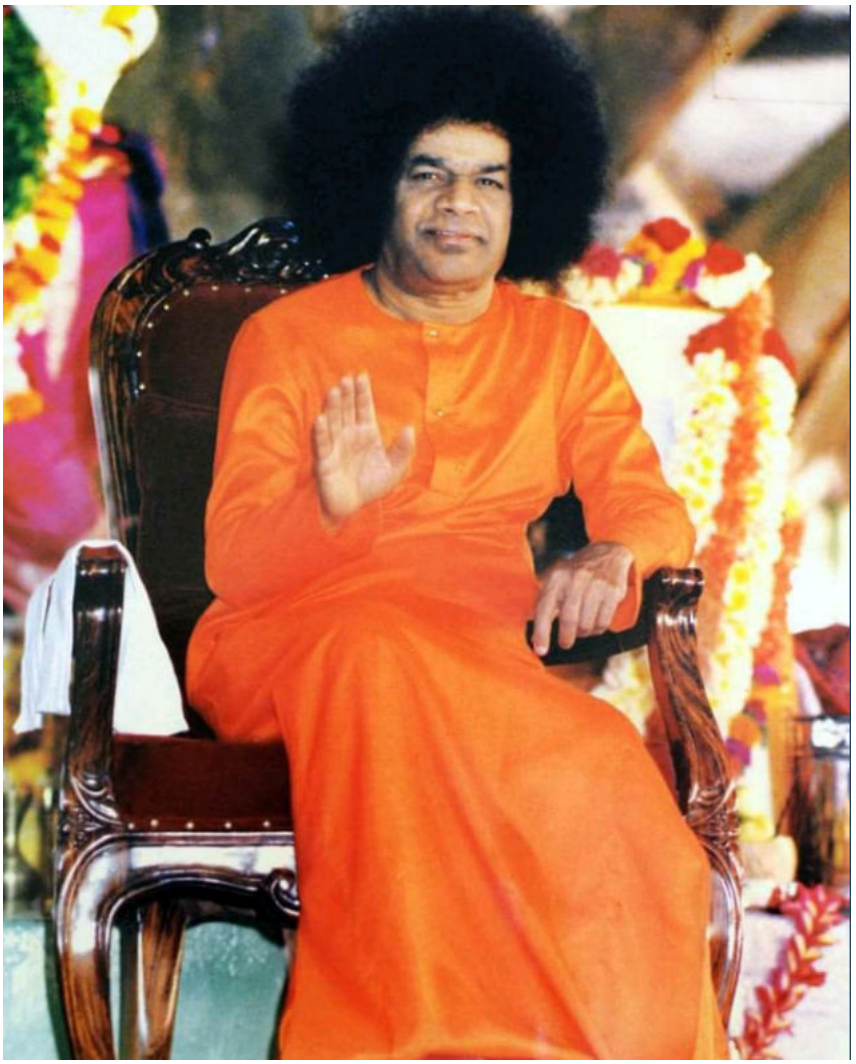
and

Centre for Advanced Technology, Indore 452013, India

Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated at the lotus feet of:

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



There is only ONE caste -The Caste of Humanity

There is only ONE religion –The Religion of Love

There is only ONE language –The Language of the Heart

There is only ONE God –He is Omnipresent

.....Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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PREFACE

This free ebook is a compilation of information on the famous saint **Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, and his teachings.**

Here, information about Maharaj's early life, sadhana, guru and lineage of gurus, teachings and his special style of teaching, Nisarga Yoga, his last days, last teachings, last moment, monuments for him, some quotations etc are given (See pages7 to 54).
From page 55 to 80, very good photos and videos from FaceBook pages are shown.
Links to Nisargadatta YouTube channel give great audios and videos of talks of Maharaj with translation on page 81.
On page 82, links to YouTube videos giving talks by Maharaj are shown.
And, the Appendix on page 84 gives a detailed account, by David Godman, regarding Maharaj's meetings with various persons, saints etc and about his teachings. It is really a very exhaustive and inspiring account. Please do see it.

Acknowledgements:

Many of my friends and relatives have actively encouraged me in my attempt to compile this free ebook. I sincerely thank them for their support.

My wife Kala has always encouraged and supported me in all my literary works, sacrificing much of her time. I express my deep appreciation to her.

I have drawn heavily from many references, viz. Wikipedia, FaceBook pages, and associated YouTube videos etc.

Finally, I express my immense gratitude to Sri Sathya Sai Baba for His Grace and blessings, prompting me to initiate, continue and complete this work.

M. Thirumaleshwar,

February 10, 2022

Email: tmuliya@rediffmail.com

Ref: Wikipedia

Nisargadatta Maharaj[1] (17 April 1897 – 8 September 1981), born Maruti Shivrampant Kambli, was an Indian guru of nondualism, belonging to the Inchagiri Sampradaya, a lineage of teachers from the Navnath Sampradaya and Lingayat Shaivism.

Personal	
Born	Maruti Shivrampant Kambli 17 April 1897 Bombay, Bombay Presidency, British India
Died	8 September 1981 (aged 84) Mumbai, India
Religion	Hinduism
Order	Inchegeri Sampradaya
Philosophy	Nisarga Yoga
Religious career	
Guru	Siddharameshwar Maharaj

Quotation

Establish yourself firmly in the awareness of 'I AM'. This is the beginning, and also the end of all endeavour.

The publication in 1973 of I Am That, an English translation of his talks in Marathi by Maurice Frydman, brought him worldwide recognition and followers, especially from North America and Europe.[2]

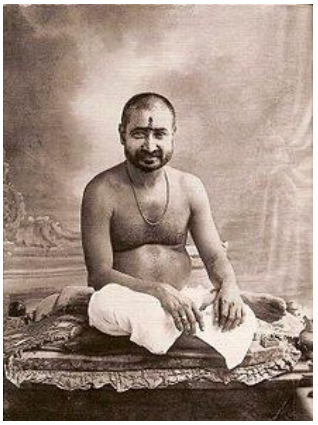
Biography

Early life

Nisargadatta was born on 17 April 1897 to Shivrampant Kambli and Parvati bai, in Bombay.[web 1][dubious – discuss] The day was also Hanuman Jayanti, the birthday of Hanuman, hence the boy was named 'Maruti', after him.[3][web 2][note 1] His parents were followers of the Varkari sampradaya,[web 3] an egalitarian Vaishnavite bhakti tradition which worships Vithoba. His father, Shivrampant, worked as a domestic servant in Mumbai and later became a petty farmer in Kandalgaon.

Maruti Shivrampant Kambli was brought up in Kandalgaon, a small village in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra, with his two brothers, four sisters and deeply religious parents.[web 4] In 1915, after his father died, he moved to Bombay to support his family back home, following his elder brother. Initially he worked as a junior clerk at an office but quickly he opened a small goods store, mainly selling beedis (leaf-rolled cigarettes) and soon owned a string of eight retail shops.[web 5] In 1924 he married Sumatibai and they had three daughters and a son.

Sadhana



Nisargadatta Maharaj met his guru Siddharameshwar Maharaj in 1933.

In 1933, he was introduced to his guru, Siddharameshwar Maharaj, the head of the Inchegiri branch of the Navnath Sampradaya, by his friend Yashwantrao Baagkar. His guru told him, "You are not what you take yourself to be...".[web 6] Siddharameshwar initiated him into the Inchegiri Sampradaya, giving him meditation-instruction and a mantra, which he immediately began to recite.[web 3] Siddharameshwar gave Nisargadatta instructions for self-enquiry which he followed verbatim, as he himself recounted later:

My Guru ordered me to attend to the sense 'I am' and to give attention to nothing else. I just obeyed. I did not follow any particular course of breathing, or meditation, or study of scriptures. Whatever happened, I would turn away my attention from it and remain with the sense 'I am'. It may look too simple, even crude. My only reason for doing it was that my Guru told me so. Yet it worked![4]

Following his guru's instructions to concentrate on the feeling "I Am", he used all his spare time looking at himself in silence, and remained in that state for the coming years, practising meditation and singing devotional bhajans:[web 7]

My Guru told me: "...Go back to that state of pure being, where the ‘I am’ is still in its purity before it got contaminated with ‘this I am’ or ‘that I am.’ Your burden is of false self-identifications—abandon them all." My guru told me, "Trust me, I tell you: you are Divine. Take it as the absolute truth. Your joy is divine, your suffering is divine too. All comes from God. Remember it always. You are God, your will alone is done." I did believe him and soon realised how wonderfully true and accurate his words were. I did not condition my mind by thinking, "I am God, I am wonderful, I am beyond." I simply followed his instruction, which was to focus the mind on pure being, "I am," and stay in it. I used to sit for hours together, with nothing but the "I am" in my mind and soon the peace and joy and deep all-embracing love became my normal state. In it all disappeared—myself, my guru, the life I lived, the world around me. Only peace remained, and unfathomable silence. (I Am That, Dialogue 51, April 16, 1971).[web 3]

After an association that lasted hardly two and a half years, Siddharameshwar Maharaj died on 9 November 1936.[5][web 3] In 1937, Maharaj left Mumbai and travelled across

India.[web 8] After eight months he returned to his family in Mumbai in 1938.[6] On the journey home his state of mind changed, realising that "nothing was wrong anymore."[web 3] He spent the rest of his life in Mumbai, maintaining one shop to earn an income.[web 3]

Later years

Between 1942–1948 he suffered two personal losses, first the death of his wife, Sumatibai, followed by the death of his daughter. He started to give initiations in 1951, after a personal revelation from his guru, Siddharameshwar Maharaj.[web 3]

After he retired from his shop in 1966, Nisargadatta Maharaj continued to receive and teach visitors in his home, giving discourses twice a day, until his death on 8 September 1981 at the age of 84, of throat cancer.[web 9]

Teachings

Style of teaching

Nisargadatta gave talks and answered questions at his humble flat in Khetwadi, Mumbai, where a mezzanine room was created for him to receive disciples and visitors. This room was also used for daily chantings, bhajans (devotional songs), meditation sessions, and discourses.[web 3]

Cathy Boucher notes that the Inchagiri Sampradaya emphasised mantra meditation from its inception in the early 19th century, but that the emphasis shifted toward a form of Self-enquiry with Sri Siddharameshwar.[7] Nevertheless,

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj [...] still gave mantra initiation, with the underlying point being that the mantra was more than sound, it was the Absolute Itself which could be reverberated throughout life in all circumstance.[7]

Boucher also notes that Nisargadatta adopted a different mode of instruction, through questions and answers, for his western disciples.[7] Many of Nisargadatta Maharaj's talks were recorded, and formed the basis of I Am That as well as of the several other books attributed to him.[8]

Awareness of true nature

Nisargadatta's "I Am That" in Hindi.Nisargadatta's "I Am That" in English.

The According to Timothy Conway, Nisargadatta's only subject was:

...our real Identity as the birthless-deathless, infinite-eternal Absolute Awareness or Parabrahman, and Its play of emanated universal consciousness. For Maharaj, our only "problem" (an imagined one!) is a case of mistaken identity: we presume to be an individual, and, originally and fundamentally, we are not an individual, we are intrinsically always and only the Absolute.[web 3]

Nisargadatta explains:

The life force [prana] and the mind are operating [of their own accord], but the mind will tempt you to believe that it is "you". Therefore understand always that you are the timeless spaceless witness. And even if the mind tells you that you are the one who is acting, don't believe the mind. [...] The apparatus [mind, body] which is functioning has come upon your original essence, but you are not that apparatus.[9]

In Consciousness and the Absolute, Nisargadatta Maharaj further explains:

In the consciousness hierarchy there are three stages:

1. Jivatman is the one who identifies himself with the body-mind. One who thinks I am a body, a personality, an individual apart from the world. He excludes and isolates himself from the world as a separate personality because of identification with the body and the mind.

2. Next only the beingness, or the consciousness, which is the world. "I Am" means my whole world. Just being and the world. Together with the beingness the world is also felt - that is Atman.

3. The Ultimate principle that knows this beingness cannot be termed at all. It cannot be approached or conditioned by any words. That is the Ultimate state.

The hierarchy I explain in common words, like: I have a grandson (that is jivatma). I have a son and I am the grandfather. Grandfather is the source of the son and grandson.

The three stages cannot be termed as knowledge. The term knowledge comes at beingness level. I have passed on to you the essence of my teachings.[10]

Self-enquiry

According to Conway, awareness of the Absolute could be regained by:

... a radical disidentification from the dream of "me and my world" via intensely meditative self-inquiry (atma-vichara) and supreme Wisdom-Knowledge (vijñana or jñana). "I know only Atma-yoga, which is 'Self-Knowledge,' and nothing else.... My process is Atma-yoga, which means abidance in the Self."[web 3]

Devotion and mantra repetition

Nisargadatta was critical of a merely intellectual approach to non dual Truth.[web 3] He had a strong devotional zeal towards his own guru,[web 3] and suggested the path of devotion, Bhakti yoga, to some of his visitors, as he believed the path of knowledge, Jnana yoga was not the only approach to Truth. Nisargadatta also emphasised love of Guru and God,[11][web 3] and the practice of mantra repetition and singing bhajans, devotional songs.[web 3][note 2]

Scriptures

According to Timothy Conway, Nisargadatta often read Marathi scriptures: Nath saint Jnanesvar's Amritanubhava and Jnanesvari (Gita Commentary); Varkari Sants, namely Eknatha's Bhagavat (Eknathi Bhagavata, a rewrite of the Bhagavad Purana), Ramdas' Dasbodha, and Tukaram's poems; but also the Yoga Vasistha, Adi Shankara's treatises, and some major Upanishads.[web 3]

Nisarga Yoga

Nisargadatta taught what has been called Nisarga Yoga[12] (Nisarga can be translated as "nature").[13] In I Am That, Nisarga Yoga is defined as living life with "harmlessness," "friendliness," and "interest," abiding in "spontaneous awareness" while being "conscious of effortless living."[14] The practice of this form of Yoga involves meditating on one's sense of "I am", "being" or "consciousness" with the aim of reaching its ultimate source prior to this sense, which Nisargadatta called the "Self".

The second edition of I Am That includes an epilogue titled Nisarga Yoga by Maurice Frydman which includes this passage:

"This dwelling on the sense 'I am' is the simple, easy and natural Yoga, the Nisarga Yoga. There is no secrecy in it and no dependence; no preparation is required and no initiation. Whoever is puzzled by his very existence as a conscious being and earnestly wants to find his own source, can grasp the ever-present sense of 'I am' and dwell on it assiduously and patiently, till the clouds obscuring the mind dissolve and the heart of being is seen in all its glory."[12]

Nisargadatta did not prescribe a specific practice for self-knowledge but advised his disciples, "Don't pretend to be what you are not, don't refuse to be what you are."[15] By means of self-enquiry, he advised, "Why don't you enquire how real are the world and the person?".[16] Nisargadatta frequently spoke about the importance of having the "inner conviction" about one's true nature and without such Self-knowledge one would continue to suffer.[13] Nisargadatta claimed that the names of the Hindu deities Shiva, Rama and Krishna were the names of nature (Nisarga) personified,[13] and that all of life arises from the same non-dual source or Self. Remembrance of this source was the core of Nisargadatta's message:

'You are not your body, but you are the consciousness in the body, because of which you have the awareness of 'I am'. It is without words, just pure beingness. It has become the soul of the world. In the absence of your consciousness, the world will not be experienced. Hence, you are the consciousness… remember what you have heard… meditate on it.

Meditation means you have to hold consciousness by itself. The consciousness should give attention to itself. This consciousness is Ishwara. As there is no God other than this consciousness, worship it.' 'The knowledge "I am" is God. It is Ishwara, as well as maya. Maya is God's power. All the names of God are of this consciousness only in different forms. Remember the fact "I am not the body" and get firmly established. That is the sign of a true seeker.'[17]

The Seven Principles of Nisarga Yoga

(As identified by Nic Higham, 2018) [18]

- Non-identification and right understanding
- Interest and earnestness
- Spontaneity and effortlessness
- Attentiveness to being
- Right action
- Going within to go beyond
- Awareness of Self

Lineage

Disciples

Among his best known disciples are Maurice Frydman, Sailor Bob Adamson, Stephen Howard Wolinsky (born 31 January 1950), Jean Dunn, Alexander Smit (Sri Parabrahmadatta Maharaj) (1948-1998), Douwe Tiemersma (7 January 1945 – 3 January 2013), Robert Powell, Timothy Conway, Wayne Dyer[19] and Ramesh Balsekar (1917-2009). A less well known disciple is Sri Ramakant Maharaj (born 8 July 1941), who received the naam mantra from Nisargadatta in 1962, spent the next 19 years with the master.[web 10][web 11] and claims to be "the only Indian direct disciple of Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj" who offers initiation into this lineage.[web 12] Sachin Kshirsagar, who has published a series of books on Nisargadatta in the Marathi language[web 13] and also re-published Master of Self Realisation, says to have received the Naam (Mantra) in a dream from Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj on 17 Oct., 2011.

Successors

David Godman gives the following account of an explanation by Nisargadatta of the succession of Gurus in the Inchagiri Sampradaya:

I sit here every day answering your questions, but this is not the way that the teachers of my lineage used to do their work. A few hundred years ago there were no questions and answers at all. Ours is a householder lineage, which means everyone had to go out and earn his living. There were no meetings like this where disciples met in large numbers with the Guru and asked him questions. Travel was difficult. There were no buses, trains and planes. In the old days the Guru did the travelling on foot, while the disciples stayed at home and looked after their families. The Guru walked from village to village to meet the disciples. If he met someone he thought was ready to be included in the sampradaya, he would initiate

him with the mantra of the lineage. That was the only teaching given out. The disciple would repeat the mantra and periodically the Guru would come to the village to see what progress was being made. When the Guru knew that he was about to pass away, he would appoint one of the householder-devotees to be the new Guru, and that new Guru would then take on the teaching duties: walking from village to village, initiating new devotees and supervising the progress of the old ones.[web 14]

According to David Godman, Nisargadatta was not allowed by Siddharameshwar to appoint a successor, because he "wasn't realised himself when Siddharameshwar passed away."[web 14] Nisargadatta started to initiate others in 1951, after receiving an inner revelation from Siddharameshwar.[web 3] Nisargadatta himself explains:

The Navnath Sampradaya is only a tradition, way of teaching and practice. It does not denote a level of consciousness. If you accept a Navnath Sampradaya teacher as your Guru, you join his Sampradaya. Usually you receive a token of his grace - a look, a touch, or a word, sometimes a vivid dream or a strong remembrance.[20]

Note:

Nisargadatta himself said to a visitor:

I may talk Non-duality to some of the people who come here. That is not for you and you should not pay any attention to what I am telling others. The book of my conversations [I Am That] should not be taken as the last word on my teachings. I had given some answers to questions of certain individuals. Those answers were intended for those people and not for all. Instruction can be on an individual basis only. The same medicine cannot be prescribed for all.
Nowadays people are full of intellectual conceit. They have no faith in the ancient traditional practices leading up to Self-Knowledge. They want everything served to them on a platter. The path of Knowledge makes sense to them and because of that they may want to practice it. They will then find that it requires more concentration than they can muster and, slowly becoming humble, they will finally take up easier practices like repetition of a mantra or worship of a form. Slowly the belief in a Power greater than themselves will dawn on them and a taste for devotion will sprout in their heart. Then only will it be possible for them to attain purity of mind and concentration.[web 3]

Ref: sri-nisargadatta-maharaj.blogspot.com

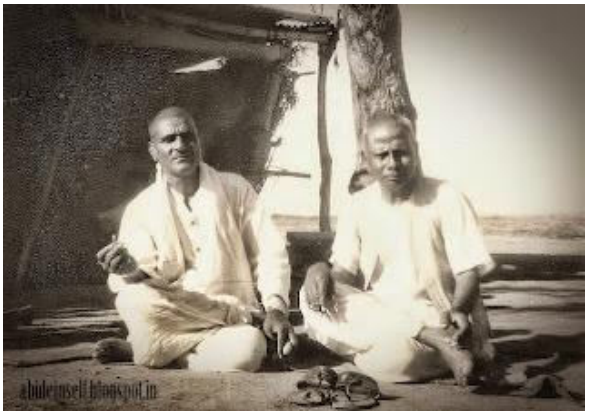
About Nisargadatta Maharaj

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj was an Indian spiritual teacher and philosopher of Advaita (Nondualism), and a Guru, belonging to the Navnath Sampradaya. Sri Nisargadatta, with his direct and minimalistic explanation of non-dualism, is considered the most famous teacher of Advaita since Ramana Maharshi. In 1973, the publication of his most famous and widely-translated book, "I AM THAT", an English translation of his talks in Marathi by Maurice Frydman, brought him worldwide recognition and followers.

According to Sri Nisargadatta, the purpose of spirituality is to know who you are. His discussions are not for academic scholars. He is a rebellious spirit, abrupt in his style of discussion, provocative, and immensely profound, cutting to the core and wasting little effort on inessentials. His terse but potent sayings are known for their ability to trigger radical shifts from philosophical mind-games to the purity of consciousness, just by hearing or even reading them.

He talked about the 'direct way' of knowing the Final Reality, in which one becomes aware of one's original nature through mental discrimination, breaking the mind's false identification with the ego, knowing that "You are already That". The scene for these talks was a small upstairs room at his humble flat in Khetwadi, used for his own meditation and also for daily chantings. A simple man, Nisargadatta was a house-holder and a petty shop-keeper selling bidis - hand-made leaf-rolled cigarettes.

Biography



Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj was born on April 17, 1897, at break of dawn, the full moon of Chaitra, to Shivrampant Kambli and Parvatibai, in Bombay, as the second eldest of six children. The day was the birthday of Lord Hanuman, hence he was named 'Maruti', after Lord Hanuman himself.

Though born in Bombay, Maruti Shivrampant Kambli was brought up in Kandalgaon, a small village in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra State, because his father Shivrampant, who had been employed by a merchant in Bombay, had moved the family to the countryside in 1896 when a plague-epidemic broke out in the city. Here he grew up amidst his family of six siblings, and deeply religious parents. His father, Shivrampant, worked as a domestic servant in Mumbai and later became a petty farmer in Kandalgaon. In his youth, Maruti performed all the forms of hard labor required by life on a farm. Though he received little formal education, he was exposed to spiritual ideas by quietly listening to and absorbing the

conversations between his father Shivrampant and the latter's friend, Visnu Haribhau Gore, a pious brahman.

In 1915, after his father passed away, and in 1920, Maruti moved to Bombay to support his family, following his elder brother. Initially he worked as a junior clerk at an office but quickly he opened a small goods store, mainly selling bidis – hand-made cigarettes, and soon owned a string of eight retail shops. In 1924 he married Sumatibai and they had three daughters and a son.

In 1933, he was introduced to his guru, Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, the head of the Inchegeri branch of the Navnath Sampradaya, by Maruti's friend Yashwantrao Baagkar. Nisargadatta was given with simple instructions which he followed verbatim. Following his guru's instructions to concentrate on "I Am", he utilised all his spare time looking at himself in silence, and remained in that state for the coming years, practising meditation and singing devotional bhajans.

Maharaj said : "My Guru ordered me to attend to the sense 'I am' and to give attention to nothing else. I just obeyed. I did not follow any particular course of breathing, or meditation, or study of scriptures. Whatever happened, I would turn away my attention from it and remain with the sense 'I am'. It may look too simple, even crude. My only reason for doing it was that my Guru told me so. Yet it worked!"

After an association of nearly two and a half years, Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj passed away on Nov 9, 1936. Soon he adopted a new name, 'Nisargadatta' meaning the one who dwells in the natural state. He was also appointed as the spiritual head of the Inchegeri branch of Navnath Sampradaya, the 'Nine Masters' tradition, a place he retained through his life.

In 1937, he left Mumbai and travelled across India, eventually returning to his family in Mumbai in 1938. His business had been virtually wiped out, but eventually succeeded in opening a tiny street-shop beside his apartment as an income source for his family. Between 1942-1948 he suffered two personal losses, first the death of his wife, Sumatibai, followed by the death of his daughter.

In 1951, after receiving an inner revelation from Siddharamesvar, he began to initiate students into discipleship. After he retired from his shop in 1966, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj continued to receive and teach visitors in his home, giving discourses twice a day. In 1972, he was introduced to the wider world of spiritual aspirants by reading several pages on him in Peter Brent's book, Godmen of India. In 1973, the amazing book, "I am That", was published.

By the latter 1970s, the Maharaj's travelling had largely dropped off due to old age and illness, throat cancer was diagnosed in 1980. During the last years, 1979-1981, though his body was very weak, the talks were highly advanced. These were taped and later edited by Jean Dunn and published as three books.

Nisargadatta Maharaj passed away on September 8, 1981 at the age of 84.

Navnath Sampradaya

Hinduism comprises numerous sects, creeds and cults and the origin of most of them is lost in antiquity. The Nath Sampradaya, later known as the Navnath Sampradaya, is one of them. Some scholars are of the view that this sect originated with the teachings of the mythical Rishi Dattatreya, who is believed to be a combined incarnation of the holy trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The unique spiritual attainments of this legendary figure are mentioned in the Bhagavata Purana, the Mahabharata and also in some later Upanishads. Others hold that it is an offshoot of Hatha Yoga.

Whatever be its origin, the teachings of the Nath Sampradaya have, over the centuries, become labyrinthine in complexity and have assumed different forms in different parts of India. Some Gurus of the Sampradaya lay stress on bhakti, devotion; others on jnana, knowledge; still others on yoga, the union with the ultimate. In the fourteenth century we find Svatmarama Svami, the great Hathayogin, bemoaning ‘the darkness arising out of multiplicity of opinions’ to displel which he lit the lamp of his famous work Hathayogapradipika.

According to some learned commentators, the Nath Gurus propound that the entire creation is born out of nada (sound), the divine principle, and bindu (light), the physical principle and the Supreme Reality from which these two principles emanate is Shiva. Liberation according to them is the merging of the soul into Shiva through the process of laya, dissolution of the human ego, the sense of I-ness.

In the day-to-day instructions to their devotees, however, the Nath Gurus seldom refer to the metaphysics discovered by the scholars in their teachings. In fact their approach is totally non-metaphysical, simple and direct. While the chanting of sacred hyms and devotional songs as well as the worship of the idols is a traditional feature of the sect, its teaching emphasises that the Supreme Reality can be realised only within the heart.

The Nath Sampradaya came to be known as Navnath Sampradaya when sometime in the remote past, the followers of the sect chose nine of their early Gurus as exemplars of their

creed. Bur there is no unanimity regarding the names of these nine Masters. The most widely accepted list however is as follows:

- Matsyendranath Or Macchchindranath
- Gorakhnath or Gorakshnath
- Jalandharnath or Jalandernath also known as Jan Peer
- Kanifnath
- Gahininath also known as Gaibi Peer
- Bhartrinath or Bhartarinath or Raja Bhartari
- Revananath
- Charpatnath
- Naganath or Nageshnath

Of these nine Masters, Gahininath and Revananath had large followings in the southern part of India, including Maharashtra, the state to which Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj belongs. Revananath is said to have founded a sub-sect of his own and chose Kadasiddha as his chief disciple and successor. The latter initiated Lingaa Jangam Maharaj and Bhausahib Maharaj and entrusted to their care his Ashram and the propagation of his teaching. Bhausahib Maharaj later established what came to be known as Inchegeri Sampradaya, a new movement within the traditional fold. Among his disciples were Amburao Maharaj, Girimalleshwar Maharaj, Siddharameshwar Maharaj and the noted philosopher Dr. R. D. Ranade. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj is the direct disciple and successor of Siddharameshwar Maharaj.

It may be mentioned here that, though officially the current Guru of the Inchegeri branch of the Navnath Sampradaya, Sri Nisargadatta does not seem to attach much importance to sects, cults and creeds, including his own. In answer to a questioner who wished to join the Navnath Sampradaya he said: "The Navnath Sampradaya is only a tradition, a way of teaching and practice. It does not denote a level of consciousness. If you accept a Navnath Sampradaya teacher as your Guru, you join his Sampradaya... Your belonging is a matter of your own feeling and conviction. After all, it is all verbal and formal. In reality there is neither Guru nor disciple, neither theory nor practice, neither ignorance nor realisation. It all depends upon what you take yourself to be. Know yourself correctly. There is no substitute for self-knowledge".

The teaching of Nath Sampradaya offers the seeker the royal road to liberation, a road in which all the four by-lanes of bhakti, jnana, karma and dhyana of Lord Shiva, in his hagiography, entitled Nathlingamrita, claims that the path shown by the Nath sect is the best of all and it leads to direct liberation.

Style of Teaching - Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Sri Nisargadatta's teachings are grounded in the Advaita Vedanta interpretation of the Advaita idea Tat Tvam Asi, literally "That Thou Art", (Tat = "Absolute", Tvam = "You", Asi = "are") meaning You are (actually) Absolute (who thinks otherwise). He also had a strong devotional zeal towards his own guru, and suggested the path of devotion, Bhakti yoga, to some of his visitors.

According to Sri Nisargadatta the purpose of spirituality is to know who you are, a fact he verily spoke of in the talks he gave. He talked about the 'direct way' of knowing the Final Reality, in which one becomes aware of one's original nature through mental discrimination, a method which is common to the teachers of the Navnath Sampradaya.

Many of his talks were recorded, and these recordings form the basis of 'I Am That' and all his other famous books. His words are free from cultural and religious trappings, and the knowledge he expounds is stripped bare of all that is unnecessary.

Summed up in the words of Advaita scholar and a disciple, Dr. Robert Powell, "Like the Zen masters of old, Nisargadatta's style is abrupt, provocative, and immensely profound - cutting to the core and wasting little effort on inessentials. His terse but potent sayings are known for their ability to trigger shifts in consciousness, just by hearing, or even reading them."

Nisarga Yoga

In the humble abode of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, but for the electric lights and the noises of the street traffic, one would not know in which period of human history one dwells. There is an atmosphere of timelessness about his tiny room; the subjects discussed are timeless - valid for all times; the way they are expounded and examined is also timeless; the centuries, millennia and yugas fall off and one deals with matters immensely ancient and eternally new.

The discussions held and teachings given would have been the same ten thousand years ago and will be the same ten thousand years hence. There will always be conscious beings wondering about the fact of their being conscious and enquiring into its cause and aim. Whence am I? Who am I? Whither am I? Such questions have no beginning and no end. And it is crucial to know the answers, for without a full understanding of oneself, both in time and in timelessness, life is but a dream, imposed on us by powers we do not know, for purposes we cannot grasp.

Maharaj is not a scholar. There is no erudition behind his homely Marathi; authorities he does not quote, scriptures are rarely mentioned; the astonishingly rich spiritual heritage of India is implicit in him rather than explicit. No rich Ashram was ever built around him and

most of his followers are humble working people cherishing the opportunity of spending an hour with him from time to time.

Simplicity and humility are the keynotes of his life and teachings; physically and inwardly he never takes the higher seat; the essence of being on which he talks, he sees in others as clearly as he sees it in himself. He admits that while he is aware of it, others are not yet, but this difference is temporary and of little importance, except to the mind and its ever-changing content. When asked about his Yoga, he says he has none to offer, no system to propound, no theology, cosmology, psychology or philosophy. He knows the real nature - his own and his listeners' - and he points it out. The listener cannot see it because he cannot see the obvious, simply and directly. All he knows, he knows with his mind, stimulated with the senses. That the mind is a sense in itself, he does not even suspect.

The Nisarga Yoga, the 'natural' Yoga of Maharaj, is disconcertingly simple - the mind, which is all-becoming, must recognize and penetrate its own being, not as being this or that, here or there, then or now, but just as a timeless being.

This timeless being is the source of both life and consciousness. In terms of time, space and causation it is all-powerful, being the causeless cause; all-pervading, eternal, in the sense of being beginningless, endless and ever-present. Uncaused, it is free; all-pervading, it knows; undivided, it is happy. It lives, it loves, and it has endless fun, shaping and re-shaping the universe. Every man has it, every man is it, but not all know themselves as they are, and therefore identify themselves with the name and shape of their bodies and the contents of their consciousness.

To rectify this misunderstanding of one's reality, the only way is to take full cognizance of the ways of one's mind and to turn it into an instrument of self-discovery. The mind was originally a tool in the struggle for biological survival. It had to learn the laws and ways of Nature working hand-in-hand can raise life to a higher level. But, in the process the mind acquired the art of symbolic thinking and communication, the art and skill of language. Words became important. Ideas and abstractions acquired an appearance of reality, the conceptual replaced the real, with the result that man now lives in a verbal world, crowded with words and dominated by words.

Obviously, for dealing with things and people words are exceedingly useful. But they make us live in a world totally symbolic and, therefore, unreal. To break out from this prison of the verbal mind into reality, one must be able to shift one's focus from the word to what it refers to, the thing itself.

The most commonly used word and most pregnant with feelings, and ideas is the word 'I'. Mind tends to include in it anything and everything, the body as well as the Absolute. In practice it stands as a pointer to an experience which is direct, immediate and immensely significant. To be, and to know that one is, is most important. And to be of interest, a thing must be related to one's conscious existence, which is the focal point of every desire and fear. For, the ultimate aim of every desire is to enhance and intensify this sense of existence, while all fear is, in its essence, the fear of self-extinction. To delve into the sense of 'I' - so real and vital - in order to reach its source is the core of Nisarga Yoga. Not being continuous,

the sense of ‘I’ must have a source from which it flows and to which it returns. This timeless source of conscious being is what Maharaj calls the self-nature, self-being, swarupa.

As to the methods of realising one’s supreme identity with self-being, Maharaj is peculiarly non-committal. He says that each has his own way to reality, and that there can be no general rule. But, for all the gateway to reality, by whatever road one arrives to it, is the sense of ‘I am’. It is through grasping the full import of the ‘I am’, and going beyond it to its source, that one can realise the supreme state, which is also the primordial and the ultimate. The difference between the beginning and the end lies only in the mind. When the mind is dark or turbulent, the source is not perceived. When it is clear and luminous, it becomes a faithful reflection of the source. The source is always the same - beyond darkness and light, beyond life and death, beyond the conscious and the unconscious.

This dwelling on the sense ‘I am’ is the simple, easy and natural Yoga, the Nisarga Yoga. There is no secrecy in it and no dependence; no preparation is required and no initiation. Whoever is puzzled by his very existence as a conscious being and earnestly wants to find his own source, can grasp the ever-present sense of ‘I am’ and dwell on it assiduously and patiently, till the clouds obscuring the mind dissolve and the heart of being is seen in all its glory.

The Nisarga Yoga, when persevered in and brought to its fruition, results in one becoming conscious and active in what one always was unconsciously and passively. There is no difference in kind - only in manner - the difference between a lump of gold and a glorious ornament shaped out of it. Life goes on, but it is spontaneous and free, meaningful and happy.

Maharaj most lucidly describes this natural, spontaneous state, but as the man born blind cannot visualise light and colours, so is the unenlightened mind unable to give meaning to such descriptions. Expressions like dispassionate happiness, affectionate detachment, timelessness and causelessness of things and being - they all sound strange and cause no response. Intuitively we feel they have a deep meaning, and they even create in us a strange longing for the ineffable, a forerunner of things to come, but that is all. As Maharaj puts it: words are pointers, they show the direction but they will not come along with us. Truth is the fruit of earnest action, words merely point the way.

Consciousness

Maharaj tells the visitors that it is only about this consciousness or I-am-ness that he always talks. Any enquiries about anything else would be useless because this consciousness must be there before anything else can be. If I am not (conscious), he says the world is not (as in deep sleep). It is only when I am conscious that the world exists for me. All inquiries of the seeker, Maharaj asserts, must therefore relate to this consciousness: How did it arise ? What is its source ? What sustains it ? What is its nature ? The answers to these queries lead to true knowledge. Without consciousness there can be no phenomenal existence, and therefore consciousness is the highest God that an individual in his individuality can conceive, although he may give it any name - Krishna, Iswara, Shiva, Christ etc. When consciousness leaves the body, there is no individual, no world, no God.

The relationship between the physical body and consciousness, says Maharaj, must be very clearly perceived. Consciousness can be conscious of itself only so long as it has manifested itself in a phenomenal form, a body, whether it is that of an insect, or a worm, or an animal, or a human being. Without the body, in an unmanifested state, consciousness is not conscious of itself. Without consciousness the body is merely dead material. The body, therefore, says Maharaj, is the food that sustains consciousness and the instrument through which consciousness functions. In fact, he says, consciousness is the 'nature', or 'suchness', or 'taste' of the physical body like sweetness is of sugar.

After we have understood this intimate relation between the body and consciousness, Maharaj asks us to find out the source of this body-consciousness. How did it come about ? The source of the human body is the male sperm fertilised in the ovum of a female womb, and when conception takes place, consciousness is latent therein. It is this - the fertilised male sperm with consciousness latent in it - that grows in the mother's womb, is delivered in due course as a baby, grows into infancy and thereafter through its span of life. What is the force behind this natural growth ? Nothing other than consciousness which is latent in the male sperm, the latter itself being the essence of the food consumed by the parents. It should be clear then, says Maharaj, that consciousness is the very nature of the physical body (like sweetness of sugar) and that the physical body is made of and sustained by food, which is the essence of the five elements. In this spontaneous natural process, the individual, as such, does not have any significance. The individual body is made of food, and consciousness is universal, all-pervading. How can the individual claim either separate existence, or bondage and liberation for himself ?

Has any individual been consulted about his 'birth' as the issue of particular parents ? The 'me' and 'mine' have come about only after the birth, which is clearly the result of a natural process in which neither the parents nor the baby has any choice. In other words, Maharaj points out, the body-cum-consciousness is a phenomenal unit which has spontaneously been created out of the five elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth) and the three attributes (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). This unit grows during its life-span and then 'dies' - that is, goes back to the five elements, and consciousness that was limited by the body is released into Impersonal Consciousness.

Now, asks Maharaj, in this natural process of the creation and destruction of a phenomenal unit, where is the question of a 'you' ? You have never been a party to the creation of the phenomenal unit that 'you' are supposed to be. You have been told by your parents that you were 'born' and that a particular body is 'you'. You really have no actual experience of being born. What is born is a phenomenal unit, a psychosomatic apparatus that is activated by consciousness. If consciousness is not there, the body-apparatus is not only useless but has to be disposed of as quickly as possible.

Who then are you ? You are, says Maharaj, what you were before the body-cum-consciousness came into being, what you were a hundred years ago !

The question that naturally arises at this stage is: Who then acts in the world as the body ? The answer according to Maharaj is that in manifestation consciousness is everything. It is consciousness that acts through the millions of bodies according to the innate character of the composition of each body. There are millions of psychosomatic forms but no two forms

are exactly alike in all respects because each form has a distinctive combination of the five elements plus the three attributes. Each element has its own characteristics and so has each attribute. Imagine the millions of gradations that each of these eight aspects can have, and the resulting billions and trillions of permutations and combinations that can be affected ! Consciousness acts through the physical bodies, each of which has its own temperament and character, based partly on its physical composition and partly on the conditioning it has received. If this is clearly perceived it should be also crystal clear that no individual has the autonomy to act independently. But the individual, in his ignorance, believes that it is he who acts; he 'takes delivery', says Maharaj, of the actions that take place, binds himself in illusory bondage, and suffers pain and pleasure. This is how 'bondage' arises.

Maharaj wants us to be clear on one point: Man considers himself a special being, apart from all other creation. But so far as the ingredients of the physical construct are concerned, there is no difference between the various kinds of sentient creatures. Only the process of creation differs.

-- excerpts from the book : "Pointers from Nisargadatta Maharaj" by Ramesh S. Balsekar -- there may be missing portions -- to read full text, please refer to the book --

My true state

There is happiness and unhappiness in this world only because this consciousness of I am. This consciousness of I am is the world. With the touch of this I am consciousness, this world comes into existence. Without the I am consciousness you are untouched or absolutely pure. This consciousness of I am, there is no reason or cause for it, it has just simply appeared. It comes and goes. It is impermanent. So how did I come to call myself or know myself as Siddha or accomplished? It is because of my knowledge or firm conviction that everything exists because of me, everything including this world depends on me, and not vice-versa.

I say, have respect for the Guru or God. And who is the Guru or God? The I am consciousness in its pristine purity is the Guru or God - Once you have respect for this, it will reveal all the necessary knowledge to you and you will then understand that You are beyond this "I" consciousness. You have to suffer and enjoy the consequences of this I am consciousness, there is no choice to it at all. Whatever I did not have before the birth of the I am consciousness is going to go away at death. In truth, the I am consciousness was never there, so when it goes away what do I lose? Do I die, or do I remain what I have been? There in That state, there is no "God" - no sense of separateness at all, no I am.

Without the intellect you know, or you are, the true state. But as soon as the intellect comes into play it is the operation of the I am consciousness. My true state is always without this I am consciousness - so if you live with this Knowledge, you won't be always thinking about death and contemplating death, and hence you will live longer physically as your mind and body will be free of unnecessary tensions, thoughts and beliefs. To understand this knowledge you need only a very pure and simple faith. I am not the result of any union between human beings, my true state is not born at all, for how can Truth or Reality change or undergo birth and death? If it does, it cannot be Truth. How to use this power of discrimination?

Lord Krishna said these same things 5000 years ago. Where is Lord Krishna now? And what happened to that time 5000 years ago? Where is it? It has gone, it has vanished, so why bother about all this, what the Scriptures have said, etc. Your true state is beyond this. Unless the knowledge of I am or Guru's grace blesses you, you will not be able to comprehend your true nature.

Even this I am consciousness does not really need anything. Your true state is beyond this I am and it has no needs, no requirements at all. In the time of Krishna there were also good people and bad people just as there are today, now they have gone. Where have they gone? Where did they come from in the first place? In truth there was no cause for their appearance, and if there is no cause there is no effect also. They have never existed in reality at all, they were only an appearance on the Reality. Existence itself is only an imagination - similarly with all of you here now listening to me. You should use this power of discrimination always, and find out in truth whether you really are a person. If you truly inquire you will find that you were never a person at all. Even the "Great Cause" or Creator finally is only a word. The "Great Cause" is the I am consciousness.

When you are an individual you have certain needs, but when you merge into the Self you no longer have these desires. When man becomes a jnani he loses all sense of being an individual and he moves about freely without any hopes or fears, he becomes completely fearless and without any desires. It is not the ears that hear or the eyes that see; the body by itself is insentient, it is the Self within that gives the feeling of being alive to the body. The body is only the instrument of the Self, it is not the Self. So long as you have the body consciousness or idea you will be subject to happiness and unhappiness, but if the body idea leaves you, even now while you are in the body, the happiness and unhappiness will also go, and you will be left with your true nature which is at all times complete and has no needs. For the realised man there is no such thing as body, mind, intellect, etc., for all these are only ideas. I don't even have the idea that by giving this knowledge I am doing good to the world. No such ideas of good and bad; no such distinctions and motives are with me. I am completely free of all false notions and ideas. That we are acting and talking here is only because of our consciousness of I am. This consciousness of I am is illusory and completely unreal to the jnani. Ultimately, until you can leave off completely the feeling of personality, you will not be able to fully comprehend the Absolute Reality. You are bound by this sense of being a person, even though this thread of a personality may be very thin, however, even then this bondage of personality is ultimately illusory.

All I am doing here is waking you up, calling "wake up, you have been dreaming!" That you are awake and are a person in a world - when you have any sense of personality like this, you are quite obviously fast asleep and dreaming although you falsely feel that you are awake. True awakening is to awaken to Reality and to know that you are not a person, and never have been a person. A person has needs and desires, but the Reality needs nothing at all, for this is your true state. It is not because I tell you, that you are the Reality. Even if I don't tell you, still you are the Reality. It is there with you at all times, a self-evident fact. Whatever powers or Siddhis come to you from this knowledge, don't become involved with them, negate them immediately and remain merged in your true nature. Do whatever you want in this world, but don't lose your Identity - that is that you have no identity at all.

So with this knowledge, when I die, what happens? What I never really had goes away, what was never mine leaves me, so what have I lost? What really happens to me with the physical death? Nothing at all! Do anything you want to in this world, but be with your Self, your True nature, don't forget It, be with It, dwell with It. It is bliss Itself, it is not the nature of bliss.

I have been talking and discussing so many things here, and if you feel that you still have to go and get spiritual advice or instruction from some other teacher, then you have not understood anything that I have said here. Do not unnecessarily run after or make friends with outside things or persons, but rather remain with your own Self, nature or Reality. The idea of birth and death is nothing more than a drama or play, it has no basis in Truth, don't bother about it - it is illusory, all these ideas are illusory!

Jean Dunn says:

There is happiness and unhappiness in this world only because this consciousness of I am. This consciousness of I am is the world. With the touch of this I am consciousness, this world comes into existence. Without the I am consciousness you are untouched or absolutely pure. This consciousness of I am, there is no reason or cause for it, it has just simply appeared. It comes and goes. It is impermanent. So how did I come to call myself or know myself as Siddha or accomplished? It is because of my knowledge or firm conviction that everything exists because of me, everything including this world depends on me, and not vice-versa.

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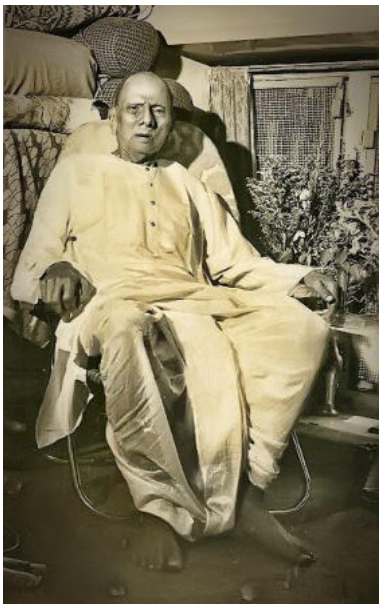
Mahasamadhi
Last days: last teachings:



Our beloved Master's vitals had been consumed by cancer and we knew his frail body would fall soon, perhaps sooner than we feared. But we were afraid of showing or fear to him for he would be hurt to find that his teaching was wasted on us. He had taught us that human beings were mere conceptual forms, no more real than dream-figures, that it is only the body that is subject to birth and death and not the self, which is not only ageless but birthless and deathless. And he was the Supreme Self. Yes, we knew all this, and yet at the prospect of his passing away we had started feeling like orphans, for we loved him too! It was difficult to rise above human feelings and failings!

During his last days - from May-June to 8 September, 1981, when he dropped his mortal coil, his body had visibly withered day after day, but his spirit remained indomitable till the end. He continued to talk, though in a weak voice, with inherent authority, and at his mere word, as it were, the listeners' illusions and delusions shrivelled.

For over a fortnight now - June 1981 - Maharaj was not able to talk to visitors with his old zest. At the insistent request from many of us he has agreed to limit the discourses to a half hour, and it is just as well that he has done so, because even thirty minutes of talking has been exhausting him physically so much that he is unable to sit up thereafter.

Maharaj's words, though fewer, are more pregnant now. He has been saying that his physical weakness prevents him from elaborating what he wants to convey. He adds that this is a sort of blessing in disguise because the listeners would now have to pay greater attention to what he says, without letting their mind wander about much. Also they would do a certain amount of thinking for themselves !

Many of the visitors, in view of the extremely weak physical condition of the Master, now restrict their questioning to a minimum, even though Maharaj presses them to get their difficulties cleared up. "There's so little time now," he says.

One morning, one of the regular visitors, perhaps with a view to keep Maharaj's mind away from his physical suffering, started talking on various matters and asking rather superficial questions. Maharaj, of course, was quick to see through the device and sat erect in his easychair. I know what you are trying to do, he said, but you forget that I am not what you think I am. I do not suffer; I cannot suffer because I am not an object. Of course there is suffering. But do you realise what this suffering is ? I am the suffering. Whatever is manifested, I am the functioning. Whatever is perceptible I am the perceiving of it. Whatever is done I am the doing of it; I am the doer of it, and, understand this, I am also that which is done. In fact, I am the total functioning.

If you have apperceived this, you need to know no more. This is the Truth. But the meaningful word is 'apperceived'. What I have said I have said for myself. But if you have apperceived this, you too can say the same thing. You and I are not two, but the same Absolute Unicity.

If this apperception prevails, you could not possibly have any quarrel with anyone, whatever he does or does not do. Why ? Because you will then have realised that whatever happens is part of the general functioning in consciousness and that no phenomenal object (which is

in effect merely an appearance in someone else's consciousness) can possibly have any independence of existence or volition of action. Ponder over this deeply.

Another morning, Maharaj started speaking though in a very weak voice.

You people come here wanting something. What you want may be knowledge with a capital 'K' - the highest Truth - but nonetheless you do want something. Most of you have been coming here for quite some time. Why ? If there had been apperception of what I have been saying, you should have stopped coming here long ago! But what actually has been happening is that you have been coming here day after day, identified as individual beings, male or female, with several persons and things you call 'mine'. Also, you think you have been coming here, of your own volition, to see another individual - a Guru - who, you expect, will give you 'liberation' from your 'bondage'.

Do you not see how ridiculous all this is ? Your coming here day after day only shows that you are not prepared to accept my word that there is no such thing as an 'individual'; that the 'individual' is nothing but an appearance; that an appearance cannot have any 'bondage' and, therefore, there is no question of any 'liberation' for an appearance.

Do you even now realise that if the very basis of your seeking is wrong, what can you achieve ? Indeed, is there anything to be achieved ? By whom ? By an appearance ?

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This is not all. Whatever I say is being tape-recorded by some people; some others take down their own notes. For what purpose ? To make the conditioning even more powerful ? Do you not realise that there never has been any question of 'who' ? Whatever has happened (if at all anything has happened) has been spontaneous. There never has been any room for an individual in the totality of manifestation; all the functioning is at the level of the conceptual physical space (Mahadakash), which is contained in a conceptual speck of consciousness the mental space of time, perception and cognition (Chidakash). This totality of the known finally merges in the infinite potentiality that is the timeless, spaceless Reality (Paramakash). In this conceptual manifestation, innumerable forms get created and destroyed, the Absolute being immanent in all phenomenal forms. Where do the individuals figure as individuals ? Nowhere. And yet everywhere, because we are the manifestation. We are the functioning. We are the life being lived. We are the living of the dream. But not as individuals.

The apperception of this truth demolishes the individual seeker; the seeker becomes the sought and the sought is the apperception.

At another session, Maharaj brought up yet another aspect of the same theme, i.e., people coming to him wanting knowledge. This time he asked: What is this 'knowledge' that you want, this knowledge about which you take down notes ? What use will be made of those notes ? Have you given any thought to this aspect of the matter ?

The real point is, he continues: Did you find any need of any knowledge a hundred years ago ? That, which you do not know and cannot know is your true state. This, which you think is real because it can be objectified, is what you appear to be. Whatever knowledge you are now seeking about your true state is unknowable, because you are what you are seeking. All that you can get as knowledge is at a conceptual level - the knowledge that you would get as an objective appearance. Such 'knowledge' is in no way different from 'ignorance', because they are inter-related counterparts at the conceptual level. In other words, comprehension at the mind level means only conceptualization and, therefore, is totally illusory. Do understand please, the difference between such conceptualised knowledge and the intuitive apperceiving which is not at the conceptual level. Indeed, apperceiving is whole-seeing or in-seeing, which is vitally different from mere intellectual seeing. Once there is apperception, the duality of counterparts, the basis of mere intellectual comprehension, totally disappears. There is no question of any 'one' thinking that he has understood something by the use of reasoning and logic. True understanding is spontaneous apperception, intuitive and choiceless, and totally non-dualistic. Meditate on what I have said.

One day when a visitor brought up the question of 'ethics' and moral behaviour (matters which have always been considered outside the scope of discussion here). Maharaj was so amused that, in spite of extreme physical weakness he sat up and said that he never ceased being astonished at the confusion in thinking that was displayed even by people who were supposed to be intellectuals. He literally laughed himself into a paroxysm of coughing. Once having understood that there is a separate place, the toilet, for specific purposes, would you, he asked, use the living room or the bedroom for those purposes ?

Once there is an unequivocal apperception of your true nature, once you clearly see the false as false, is there any question of having to decide the propriety or otherwise of any action ? Who will make the decision ? Does one have the independence of volition to make the decision ? Is there really any choice ? Once it is apperceived that there is no entity with any independence of action, would 'living' thereafter not be totally non-volitional living ? Would not, in other words, the apperceiving itself lead to an abandonment - or more accurately - a spontaneous cessation of the very concept of volitional activity ? One may think that one lives; actually, one is only 'being lived'.

Exhausted by this brief but animated exposition, Maharaj lay back again in his bed, and said that he would have liked to expand this point further, but he just did not have the physical strength. He added, with a wary touch of humour, that it was perhaps just as well that he could now only give out capsules of knowledge.

Maharaj was too weak even to sit up but was in a mood to talk. He started speaking softly and slowly: What a fantastic subject this is ! The subject is elusive, the person who thinks he is listening is illusory, and yet nobody believes that he does not exist ! When you come here, I welcome you and extend to you my humble hospitality, but in doing so I am fully aware of the exact position, i.e., there is neither a speaker nor a listener. Why is it that nobody can honestly say that he does not exist ? Because he knows that he is present - or, rather, there is that intuitive sense of presence - and, this is important, there is no entity who can say that it does not exist. If an entity did assert that it did not exist such an assertion itself would prove its existence !

However, the more important point which is not so easy to grasp, is that the source of this phenomenal presence (which is the manifestation of the unmanifested) is noumenal absence. Further - I wonder how many of you would apprehend this - it means that whenever the mind is 'fasting', totally without any conceptualization, there is phenomenal absence, and this presence of phenomenal absence is noumenal.

It was a Sunday and Maharaj's small room was packed to capacity. Most of the visitors were regular ones, but a small group had arrived from a distant part of the country. The leader of the group discerned Maharaj's affected physical condition and reconciled himself to the fact that they would have to be satisfied with Darshan only. Maharaj however sat up in his bed, looked directly at the new group and smilingly asked if there were any questions. He added that he was not at all well physically and hoped that the questions would be at an appropriate level. There was a brief murmured consultation among the group, and the leader very respectfully said that he had only one question to ask: Is there really such a thing as 'enlightenment'? He added that this question was being asked not frivolously but against the background of a long spiritual quest. Maharaj smiled and started talking in spite of the exhaustion which was clearly visible on his face. He sat up quite erect and his voice gained an unexpected vigour.

Notwithstanding my repeating it constantly, he said, even the regular visitors do not seem able to accept the fundamental fact that it is sheer nonsense to think of an individual's need for enlightenment. Basically, there is only 'I'; there is no 'me', or 'you', to be enlightened. How can a phenomenal object, which is only an appearance, be transformed by 'enlightenment' into something other than what it is, i.e., a mere appearance ?

When 'enlightenment' occurs, there is an apperceiving that what we believe to be our normal condition - that of a phenomenal object - is merely a temporary condition, like an illness, which has come over our normal true state of the noumenon. It is suddenly realised that what was being considered 'normal' was not really normal. The result of such apperceiving is a sort of instantaneous adjustment from an individual existence to just existence as such; volition disappears and whatever happens seems right and proper. One takes one's stand as the witness of all that happens, or rather only witnessing remains.

This morning Maharaj lay in bed, obviously in the no-mind state. For several minutes, the visitors — not too many, it being a working day—sat still. Suddenly the Master opened his eyes, and said very softly that there would not be any talk -because he was too weak to speak. But he smiled graciously and added very slowly: If you would only apprehend, deeply and intuitively, what you were before you acquired this body-cum-consciousness, say a hundred years ago, even from within this physical prison, you would be seeing the world without the sense of duality— not from your identity as an illusory individual centre. Conceptualising would cease.

Then the Master waved a hand to indicate that the session was over, and the visitors dispersed.

Sunday, 12 July 1981—As is usual these days Maharaj was lying in his bed, his legs being massaged by his faithful devotee and attendant, Anna. His breathing was rather laboured, mostly through the mouth, and he seemed almost fast asleep. Then suddenly he was

struggling to sit up and was helped to a reclining position, leaning heavily against propped up pillows. He started speaking, and his voice was surprisingly firm. What I want to tell you is astonishingly simple if only it would be apperceived. And the amusing part of it is that it can be apperceived only if the 'listener' is totally absent!

Then, only apperceiving remains and you are that apperceiving. What happens is that the unmanifest Absolute expresses itself in manifestation: Manifestation takes place through millions of forms; consciousness functions through each form, the conduct and working of each form being, generally, according to the basic nature of the category to which the form belongs (whether it is a plant, or an insect, or a lion, or a man), and particularly, according to the nature of the particular combination of the basic elements in each form.

No two human beings are alike (the fingerprints of no two persons are exactly alike) because the permutations and combinations of the millions of shades of the eight aspects (the five basic elements and the three Gunas) result in billions and trillions of forms, the nature of no two forms being exactly alike. Millions of such forms are constantly being created and destroyed in the process of manifestation. A clear perception of this process of manifestation comports the understanding:

(a) that there is really no question of any identification with any individual form because the very basis of this manifestation-show is duration (of each form) and duration is a concept of time; and

(b) that our true nature is the witnessing of this show. It goes without saying that the witnessing can take place only so long as the show goes on, and the show can go on only so long as there is consciousness.

And who is to understand all this? Consciousness, of course, trying to seek its source and not finding it, because the seeker is the sought. Apperceiving this truth is the final and the only liberation and 'the joker in the pack' is the fact that even 'liberation' is a concept! Now, go and ponder this.

After speaking these few words Maharaj felt totally exhausted. He lay back in bed. In a feeble voice he added: What I have said this morning is all the Truth anyone need know.

Tuesday, 14 July 1981 — A group of three was visiting Maharaj for the first time. Although languishing in bed and extremely weak, Maharaj asked the group if they had any questions. They had a brief talk amongst themselves and decided on asking only one question: "Maharaj, all three of us have done certain Sadhana for some time, but the progress does not seem to be adequate. What should we do?" Maharaj said that the purpose of any effort is to get some thing, some benefit which one does not possess. What is it that you are trying to achieve? The answer was quick and positive: We want to become like you — enlightened.

Maharaj laughed and sat up in bed. When he was made a little more comfortable with a couple of pillows to support his back, he continued: This is where the misconception lies; thinking that you are an entity who must achieve something so that you can become like the entity that you think I am! This is the thought which constitutes 'bondage', identification with

an entity — and nothing, absolutely nothing, other than dis-identification will bring about 'liberation'.

As I said, you see yourselves and me as entities, separate entities; I see you exactly as I see myself. You are what I am, but you have identified yourself with what you think you are — an object — and seek liberation for that object. Is this not a huge joke? Can any object have independent existence and volition of action? Can an object be bound? And liberated?

The questioner joined his hands in a Namaskar and most respectfully submitted that what Maharaj had said could not possibly be challenged as a theoretical ideal, but, surely, he said, even though people may be fictitious entities, nothing more than mere appearances in consciousness, how are we to live in the world, unless we do accept the different entities as 'real' enough in life?

This discussion seemed to give an extraordinary zest to Maharaj, and the feebleness in his voice gradually disappeared. He said: You see how subtle this subject is. You have provided the answer in your own question, but it has eluded you. What you have said in fact is that you know that the entity as such is totally fictitious and has no independence of its own; it is only a concept. But this fictitious entity must live its normal life. Where is the problem? Is it so very difficult to lead a normal life, knowing that living itself is a concept? Have you got the point? Once you have seen the false as false, once you have seen the dual nature of what you call 'life' — which is actually living — the rest should be simple; as simple as an actor acting his role with zest, knowing that it is only a role that he is playing in a play or a movie, and nothing more.

Recognizing this fact with conviction, apperceiving this position, is all the truth. The rest is play-acting.

Thursday, 16 July 1981 — There were only a few regular visitors present. Maharaj, although visibly tired and exhausted, demanded that someone should ask some question, or give a talk! So, someone started with these words: "The consciousness that I have. . . . ."

If it were one of the occasional visitors who had said this, Maharaj would probably have ignored the implication of what was being said. But this was a 'regular' who should have known better. Maharaj suddenly shouted "Stop". In Spite of his debilitated condition, the word was like the sound of a gun shot. He glared at the speaker and said: What do you mean by saying: "The consciousness that I have. . . ..?" Do you realise what nonsense you have uttered? How can 'you', or anyone else, have consciousness? Do you realise the unimaginable greatness, the holiness of what you so casually call 'consciousness'? Give it whatever name you like, the word is not what it means. How can you ever forget the basic truth that consciousness is the very expression of what-we-are. It is through the stirring of consciousness that the unmanifest Absolute becomes aware of its awareness through manifestation, and the whole universe comes into existence.

It may be through inadvertence that you used these words, I don't know, but the very inadvertence displays the strength of the conditioning which makes you identify yourself with the body. You think you are the body and that the body has the consciousness. If you must consider the matter in terms of one possessing the other, surely it is consciousness that is in

possession of not only the body that you think you are but the millions of other bodies through which consciousness functions as Prajna.

Friday, 17 July 1981 — It was the sacred day of Guru Purnima and Maharaj must have drawn heavily on his dwindling physical resources, to say a few words on this most auspicious day. He was sitting up in bed, with a thick pullover on, in spite of the small room being quite warm due to over-crowding of devotees. He started talking very feebly, but soon his voice seemed to gather a new strength.

You people have been coming here hoping all the time that I would give you a programme of what you should do in order to get 'liberation.' And what I keep telling you is that since there is no entity as such, the question of bondage does not arise; and that if one is not bound there is no need for liberation. All I can do is to show you that what you are is not what you think you are.

But what I say is not acceptable to most of you. And sortie of you go elsewhere, where they are happy to be given a list of do's and don'ts. What is more, they act on such instructions with faith and diligence. But what they do not realise is that whatever they practise as an 'entity' only strengthens their identification with the illusory entity and, therefore, understanding of the Truth remains as far away as ever.

People imagine that they must somehow change themselves from imperfect human beings into perfect human beings known as sages. If only they would see the absurdity in this thinking. The one who is thinking along these lines is himself only a concept, an appearance, a character in a dream. How can a mere phenomenal phantom awaken from a dream by perfecting itself?

The only 'awakening' is apperceiving of that-which-is. Indeed there is no question of a 'who' in this apperceiving because the apperceiving itself is one's true nature; and the prerequisite of such apperceiving is the disappearance of the phenomenon. What is apperceived is manifestation as a whole, not by a 'who' keeping himself as a separate observer. The apperceiving is the total functioning of the Absolute — apperceiving is what you are. The universe appearing in consciousness is a mirror which reflects every sentient being, i.e. consciousness is the very source of the apparent universe. Consciousness is not different from its manifested content.

And such apperceiving has nothing whatsoever to do with a 'who', with a phenomenon, an appearance in consciousness which is only an infinitesimal part of the total functioning. The profound intuitive understanding of this fact is the only 'awakening', or 'enlightenment', the only illusory 'liberation' from an illusory 'bondage', the awakening from the living-dream.

What does the Guru do? A self-realised Guru would do the only thing that could be done; point a finger towards the Sadguru that is within. The Sadguru is always there whether you remember him or not, but a constant association with him — irrespective of whatever you may be doing — is all that is necessary. Anything else by way of effort will not only not help, but would be a hindrance and a hazard.

Sunday, 26 July 1981— One visitor asked: During the course of the search for one's true nature, the world without and the mind within create numerous obstructions. Why? And what should one do? Maharaj quickly answered: Hang on to the one who is searching. That is all you need to do, and indeed, there is nothing else you could really do. If you do this — i.e. never leaving the one-in-search to escape you — you will ultimately find that the seeker is none other than consciousness seeking its source, and that the seeker himself is both the seeking and the sought, and that is you.

There were several other questions which Maharaj disposed of more or less summarily, as they related to one's behaviour in the world, his main point being that it is nature, or consciousness in action, which was responsible for the spontaneous growth of the body from the moment of conception to the birth of the body and further on from infancy and childhood through youth to full development and finally to decay. "Why do you suddenly accept responsibility for the actions of the body, and thereby the bondage of retribution for such actions?" he asked.

Finally, towards the end, came the question: 'Is there any difference between a person who is an Avadhuta and another who is a Jnani?" I am asking the question because I want to know how a self-realised person acts in this world.'

Maharaj laughed, and said: All your words as questions and all my words as answers seem to go the same way into nothingness. Had even a single answer of mine found its mark, there would not be any more questions. So, in a way, what happens is best; your continued questions and my answers both contribute towards some entertainment to pass the time! Indeed, there is nothing else to be done since there is no 'purpose' to this that is seen as the Universe — it is all Lila, and we join in it. But we must understand this.

However, let us deal with your question. Avadhuta, Jnani, self-realised are all names of a state, the very basic assumption of which is the total negation of the separateness of an individual entity, and yet the question is based on an understanding that a Jnani is a 'person', and you want to know how such a person acts in this world. Do you see the contradiction in terms? As soon as there is self-realisation, the difference between a self and the others disappears, and, of course, along with it the doership of the pseudo-personality. Therefore, once self-realisation happens — do understand that 'one' does not 'acquire' self-realisation—the sense of volition, or desire, or choice of action cannot remain.

Do try to understand the significance of what I have just said. If you have understood it, you will also have understood that there can he no self-realised 'person' and, therefore, there is no question of how a self-realised person acts in the world. What happens to the body? The response to external situations is spontaneous, intuitional, without the interference of the individual divided mind, and thus excludes any question of volitional activity.

Saturday, 8 August 1981 — A young lady asked Maharaj about the significance and usefulness of repeating a Japa. Maharaj said that he would interpret the word 'Japa' in its meaning as the 'purposive' noun, which would be 'protecting'.

He continued: By continuously repeating a Japa, or a Mantra, either as one word or a combination of words, you intend to 'protect' something. What does one want to protect?

Something that one 'loves' most. What does one love most? Something which one 'needs' most: And what is it that one needs most? Something without which nothing else has any meaning, any value. Is it not the 'animus', the sense of animating presence, the consciousness, without which you cannot know anything or enjoy anything? This most precious 'need' is consciousness which you want to 'protect' at any cost, and the best way to protect anything is not to be away from it at all. Is it not?

So, the main purpose of repeating a Japa continuously is to remain one with consciousness all the time. But you must understand that this 'practice' will enable you to achieve your 'purpose' only for the limited duration while you repeat the Japa. A clear apperception of your true nature, on the other hand, is not at all based on the concept of time; apperception is intemporality.

Sunday, 9 August 1981 — The same young lady wanted to know whether the practice of observing a day every week as the 'day of silence' was a good one. Maharaj smiled and said that it would be an excellent practice if the significance of the word 'silence' was clearly understood. Maharaj explained: I have heard of certain Mahatmas and Gurus, greatly interested in politics, observing 'days of silence', when they do not speak but communicate with the aid of pen and paper. I am sure their throats get a lot of much-needed rest, but other than that, I doubt if there could be any other benefit.

What I would understand by 'silence' is total absence of word and thought. Have you ever considered from where the word comes? Before a word becomes vocal, it has to be a thought; a movement in consciousness, and therefore, the source of the word as well as the thought is consciousness. Once you understand this, you will also understand that perfect silence can only be in the absence of thought— only when thought ceases, and conceptualization and objectivization are also suspended. When conceptualization ceases, identity, which is the basis of conceptualization, cannot remain, and in the absence of identity there is no bondage.

Tuesday, 18 August 1981—This morning Maharaj was too weak to speak. The suggestion that one of the recorded tapes of his talks be played was approved by him. After about twenty minutes of this, he asked that the tape be stopped. He sat up in his bed with some difficulty, and whispered a message: "Think on what you have heard just now — what you heard and, infinitely more important, who heard it".

After this brief whispered message words failed the Master. His throat got choked. He closed his eyes, his frail physical resources grappling with an excruciating pain. And we watched helplessly.

-- excerpts from the book : "Pointers from Nisargadatta Maharaj" by Ramesh S. Balsekar -- there may be missing portions -- to read full text, please refer to the book --

Last moments

Tuesday, 8th September 1981 — Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj today attained Mahasamadhi at 7.32 p.m. at his residence Ashram.

When I arrived in the morning at his residence as usual, a little before 10 a.m. I thought Maharaj appeared considerably better than he was the previous day. His face had better colour and his eyes were more alert, but I gathered from his son that the doctor had observed that, as his chest was heavily congested and administration of oxygen was necessary. An oxygen cylinder had been arranged.

By the time I left at about 11 a.m. Maharaj had accepted first a cup of milk and a little later a cup of tea, and it appeared that he was feeling more comfortable. But when my friend Mullarpattan and I were leaving together, Mullarpattan told Maharaj that he would come again later in the afternoon as usual. Maharaj knew that generally I visited him only in the mornings, but today he specifically asked me when I would come again. I was a little startled at this question but, sensing his intent, I said I would drop in again in the evening and he seemed pleased. As we were leaving Maharaj said that he was feeling sleepy and would rest awhile.

I had a visitor in the afternoon. He stayed on a bit longer than I had expected. At about 6.30 p.m. as I was about to leave for Maharaj's residence, there was a telephone call from Mullarpattan to say that Maharaj's condition was causing serious anxiety. I rushed to Maharaj's residence and found oxygen being administered. His eyes were open, but with a blank expression which indicated that he was perhaps in the no-mind state.

His breathing was laboured and it seemed that the end could not be far away. His breathing, which was getting shallower and shallower, finally stopped altogether at 7.32 p.m. Maharaj had made the transition from the relative to the Absolute with the greatest ease and peace. Mullarpattan and I were there when the end came, along with the members of Maharaj's family and two of his personal attendants. It was decided that the funeral would take place the next day.

Wednesday, 9 September 1981 — Maharaj's body was placed in a reclining position in the special medical chair which a Belgian devotee, Josef Nauwelaerts, had personally brought over to Bombay only five weeks ago. Then we proceeded to the Banganga cremation ground in a procession which comprised several hundred devotees. The Samadhi of Maharaj's Guru, Sri Sidharamshwar Maharaj, is located on these grounds. The funeral procession started at about 12.15 p.m. Maharaj's body was carried in a truck profusely decorated with flowers and, apart from the hundreds who joined the procession on his last journey, many others paid their respects to him along the way. We reached the cremation ground at 2.45 p.m. The funeral pyre was lit by Maharaj's son at 3.40 p.m. at the end of a simple but moving ceremony, which started with the usual Arati before Maharaj's Guru's shrine, as this was his practice before starting on a journey.

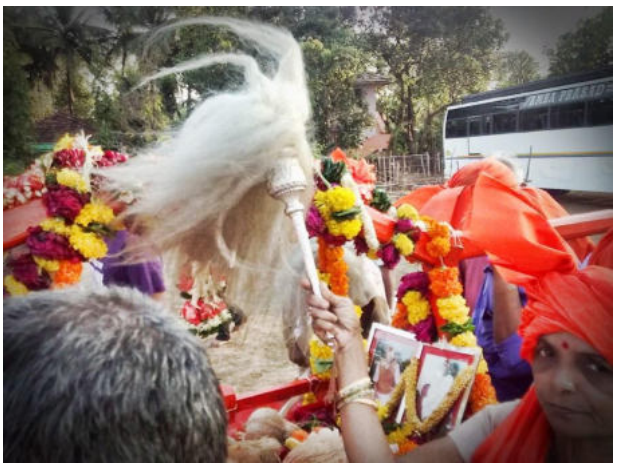
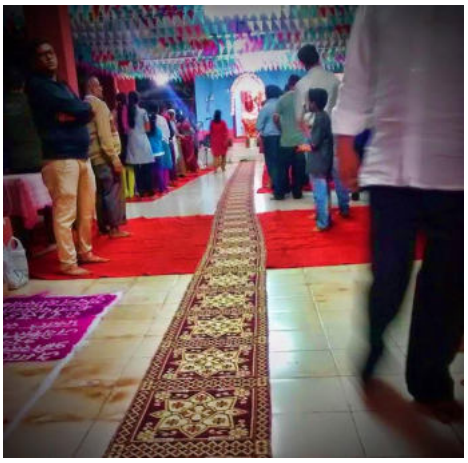
The physical form of the Master got merged into the elements of which it was made. Saying anything further about the Master would be both superfluous and inadequate, and wholly against Maharaj's teaching. Truth must be apperceived; it becomes a concept when given expression to.

-- excerpts from the book : "Pointers from Nisargadatta Maharaj" by Ramesh S. Balsekar -- there may be missing portions -- to read full text, please refer to the book --

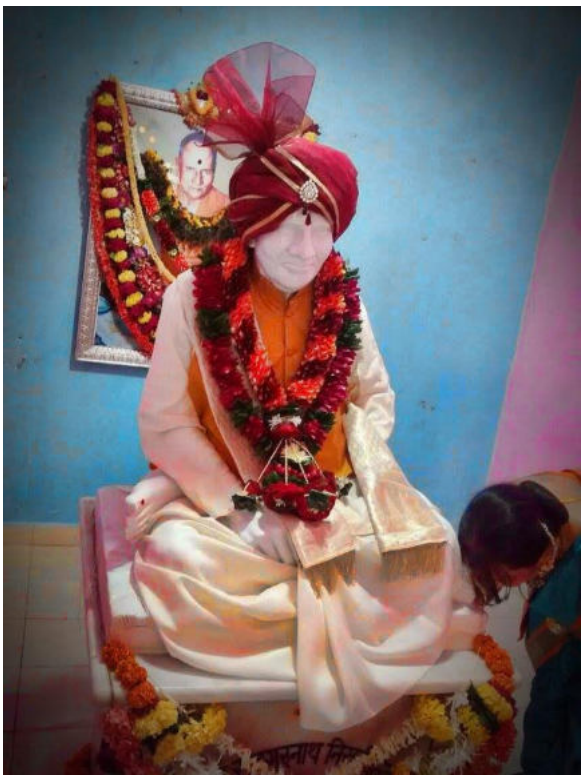
Monuments of Maharaj

1.Murti Sthapana at Kandalgoan Math

Murti Sthapana (Idol installation) of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj at Kandalgoan Math on 5th March 2015 at 3:30am.

श्री समर्थ सद्गुरुनाथ निसर्गदत्त महाराज

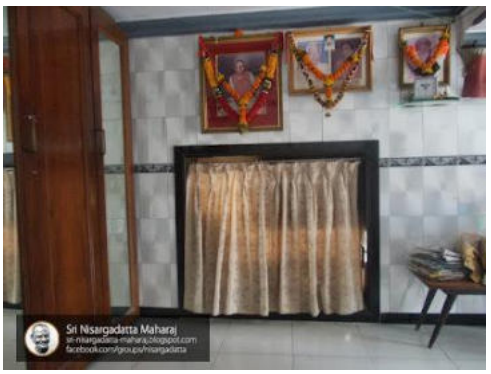


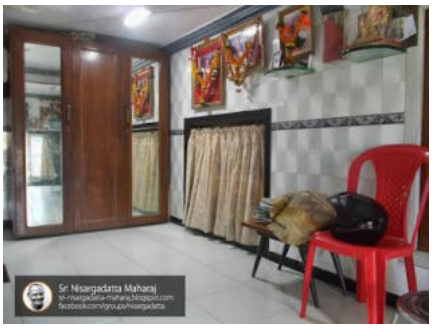
2.Nisargadatta Maharaj lived here

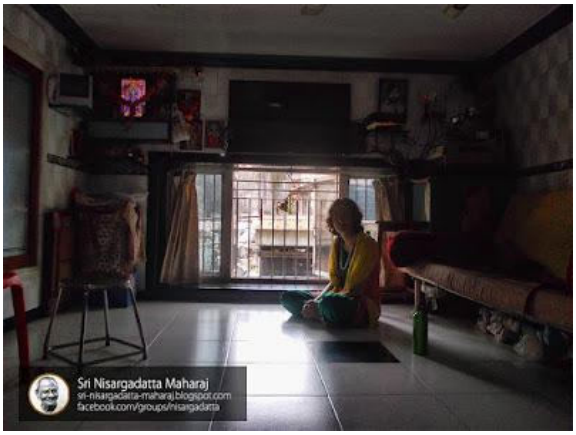
Vanmali Bhavan, 10th Lane, Khetwadi, Mumbai, India

This was where Maharaj lived. The room where the discourses were given was a loft above the family living area. A small room around 10'x20'. One must climb a narrow and steep staircase to get to it. Today some of his relatives live here. The popular landmark for the building is a public toilet opposite it. You may also refer to the pictures below. Maharaj lived as an ordinary man, and only a very few people in the neighbourhood know that such a great sage lived here.

Photographs taken during August 2016:



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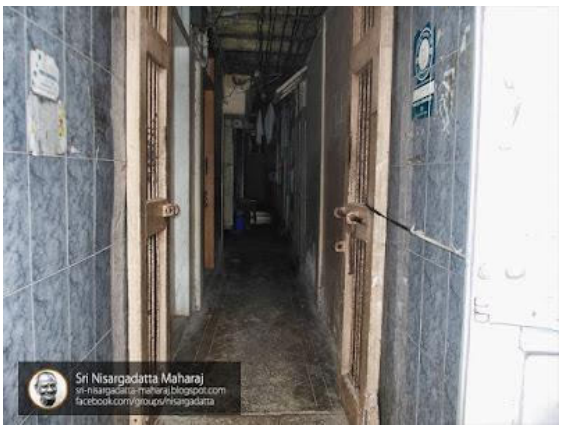


3.Nisargadatta Adhyatma Kendra, Mumbai

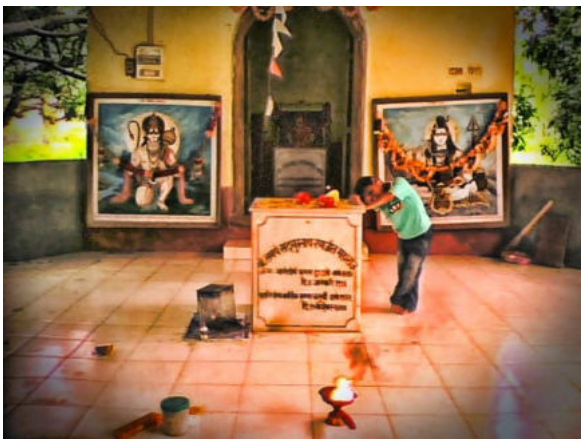
Maharaj's Samadhi, located in Mumbai is a place where people worship daily. Every Saturday 6pm to 8pm, traditional bhajans and ceremonies of worship are conducted, attended by 10 to 15 people. Discourses by Maharaj's devotees, playing of audio tapes of Maharaj, reading Dasbodh etc. happen here. Every year Maharaj's birthdays according to lunar and solar calendars are celebrated and a few other programs are given. These events will be attended by more devotees. Literature related to Maharaj is available here for purchase. The place being a little far from the central part of Mumbai, is usually not attended by many. The Samadhi of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj's Guru, Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, is located at a crematorium in Banganga, Malabar Hill, which has a large number of visitors.

Address :

"Siddhashram" , Shree Nisargadatta Maharaj Samaadhi Mandir,
Nisarga Society, Pathare Wadi, Bapu Bagve Marg,
Dahisar (West), Mumbai-400068, India

Contact Persons :
Shri Vijay Sawant - ☎ +91 9869 44 6250
Shri Nandan Joshi - ☎ +91 9969 75 4749

4.Nisargadatta Bhakti-Jnyan Kendra at Kandalgaon (Centre for Devotion and Knowledge) -



This is located in Kandalgaon, where Maharaj spent his boyhood, about 530 Km from Mumbai. You can take the Konkan Railway upto Kankavli station and from there by connecting transport to Kandalgaon. Holi Purnima (a spring festival in India) is celebrated at a greater scale here. Birth and death anniversaries of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, Siddharamewar Maharaj, Ranjeet Maharaj, Bhainath Maharaj, Bhausaheb Maharaj are also celebrated here.

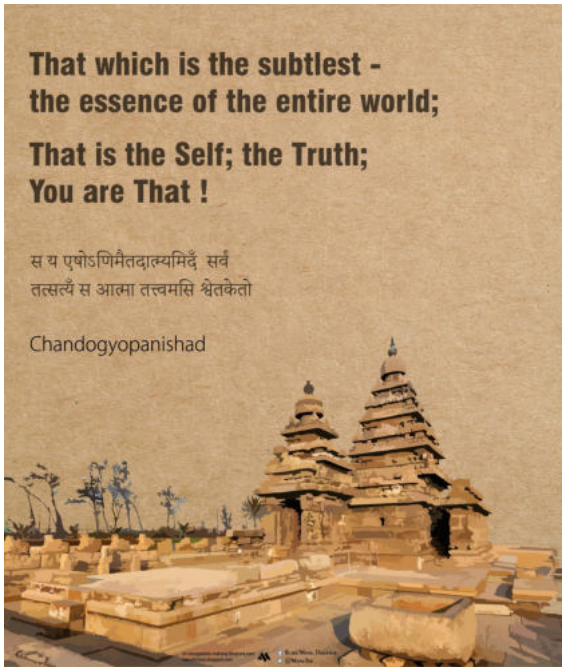
Address :
Sri Nisargadatta Bhakti-Jnyan Kendr
Kandalgaon Post, Kazar Wadi, Malvan Taluka,
Sindhudurg District, Maharashtra, India

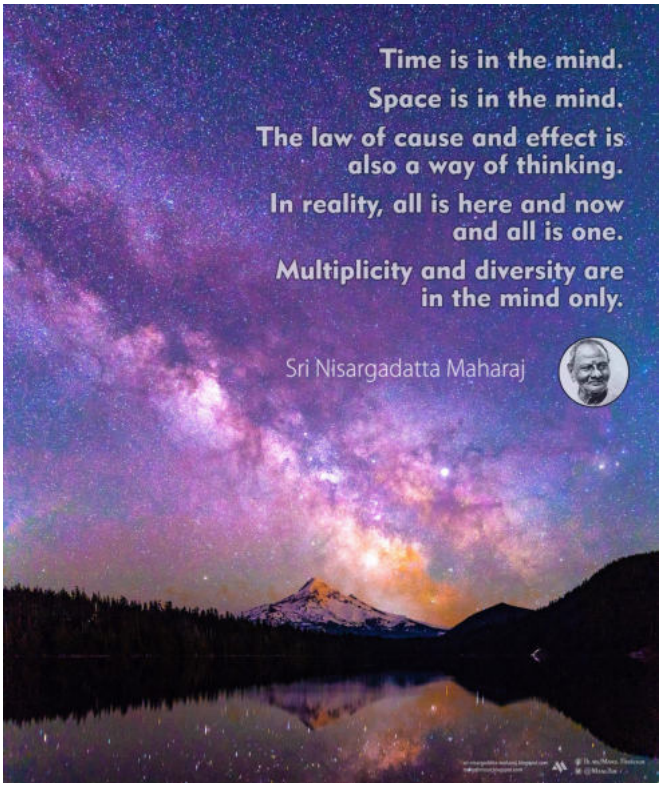
5.Holi saptah at Kandalgaon Math

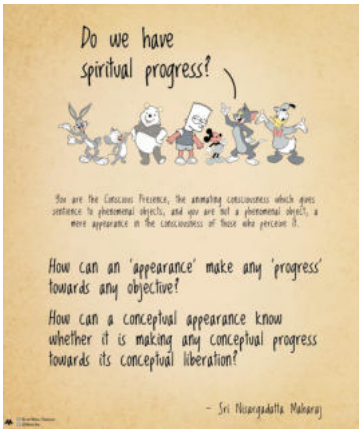
From deep sleep to the waking state, what is it? It is the 'I am' state with no words, later the words start flowing and you get involved with the meaning of the words and carry out your worldly life with the meaning of those words – that is the mind. But before the 'I am' and waking state, that borderline, there you have to be.

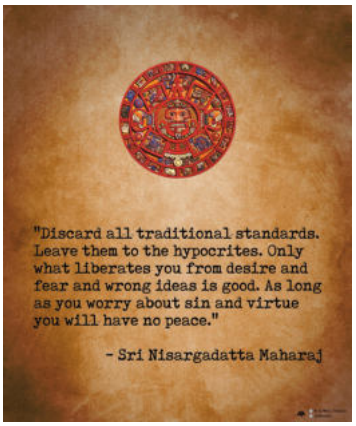
Note: There is much more information in this site: Books, photos, videos, DVD, audios, quotes, discussion groups, YouTube channel etc.
Only some important information is given here.
For more details, please see the website.

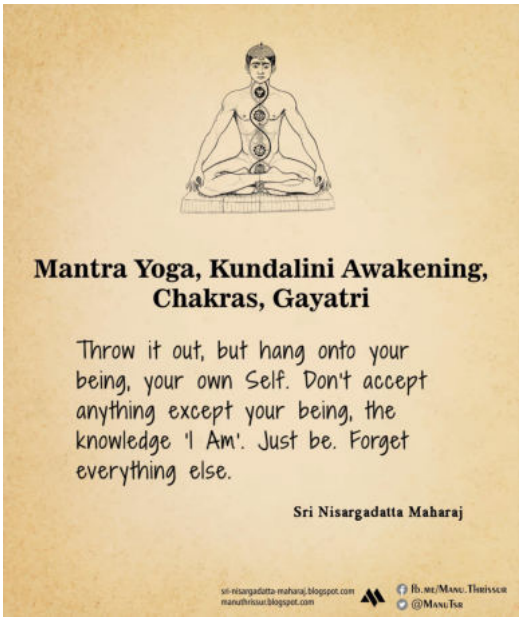
Some quotes of Maharaj:

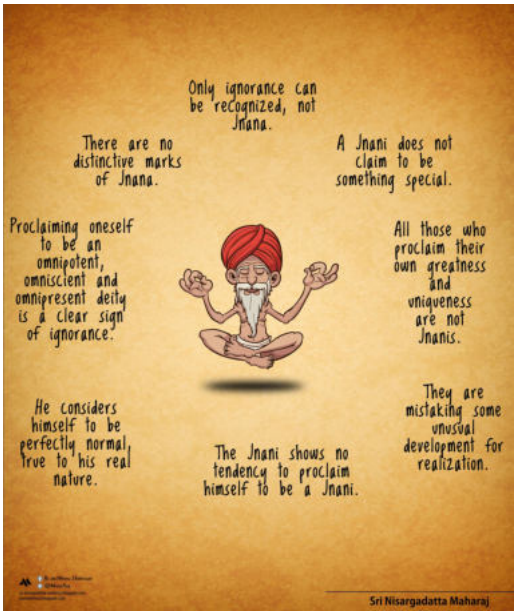

That which is the subtlest -
the essence of the entire world;
That is the Self; the Truth;
You are That !
स य एषोऽणिमैतदात्म्यमिदँ सर्वं
तत्सत्यँ स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो
Chandogyopanishad

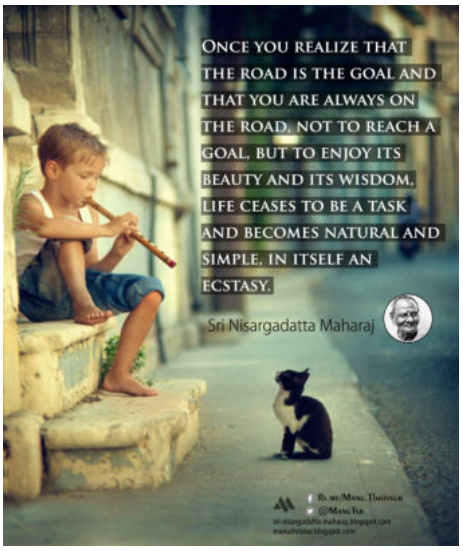

Time is in the mind.
Space is in the mind.
The law of cause and effect is
also a way of thinking.
In reality, all is here and now
and all is one.
Multiplicity and diversity are
in the mind only.
Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

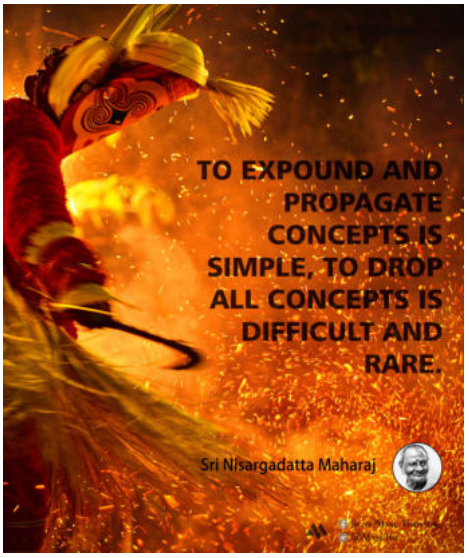

Do we have spiritual progress?
You are the Conscious Presence, the animating consciousness which gives sentience to phenomenal objects, and you are not a phenomenal object, a mere appearance in the consciousness of those who perceive it.
How can an 'appearance' make any 'progress' towards any objective?
How can a conceptual appearance know whether it is making any conceptual progress towards its conceptual liberation?
- Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

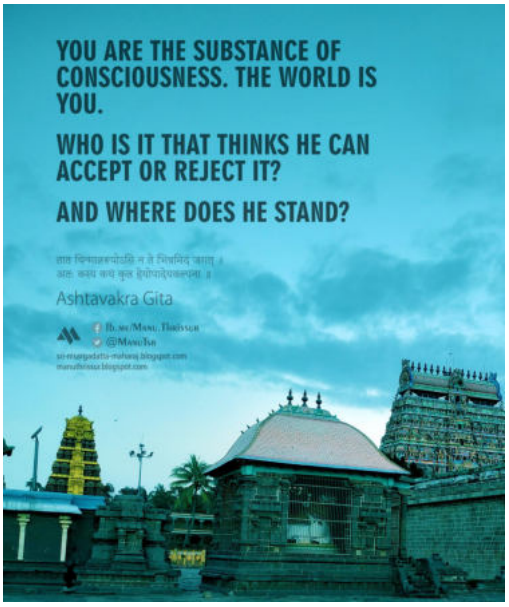

"Discard all traditional standards. Leave them to the hypocrites. Only what liberates you from desire and fear and wrong ideas is good. As long as you worry about sin and virtue you will have no peace."
- Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj


Mantra Yoga, Kundalini Awakening, Chakras, Gayatri
Throw it out, but hang onto your being, your own Self. Don't accept anything except your being, the knowledge 'I Am'. Just be. Forget everything else.
Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

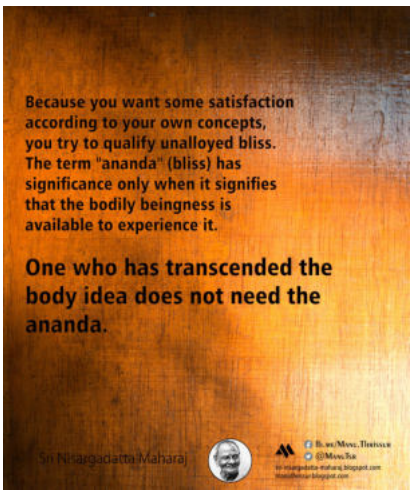

Only ignorance can be recognized, not Jnana.
There are no distinctive marks of Jnana.
A Jnani does not claim to be something special.
Proclaiming oneself to be an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent deity is a clear sign of ignorance.
All those who proclaim their own greatness and uniqueness are not Jnanis.
He considers himself to be perfectly normal, true to his real nature.
The Jnani shows no tendency to proclaim himself to be a Jnani.
They are mistaking some unusual development for realization.
Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj


ONCE YOU REALIZE THAT THE ROAD IS THE GOAL AND THAT YOU ARE ALWAYS ON THE ROAD, NOT TO REACH A GOAL, BUT TO ENJOY ITS BEAUTY AND ITS WISDOM, LIFE CEASES TO BE A TASK AND BECOMES NATURAL AND SIMPLE, IN ITSELF AN ECSTASY.
Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj


TO EXPOUND AND PROPAGATE CONCEPTS IS SIMPLE, TO DROP ALL CONCEPTS IS DIFFICULT AND RARE.
Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj


YOU ARE THE SUBSTANCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. THE WORLD IS YOU.
WHO IS IT THAT THINKS HE CAN ACCEPT OR REJECT IT?
AND WHERE DOES HE STAND?
Ashtavakra Gita

"IF THE WORLD IS FALSE, THEN THE PLAN AND ITS CREATOR ARE ALSO FALSE"
Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj


Because you want some satisfaction according to your own concepts, you try to qualify unalloyed bliss. The term "ananda" (bliss) has significance only when it signifies that the bodily beingness is available to experience it.
One who has transcended the body idea does not need the ananda.
Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

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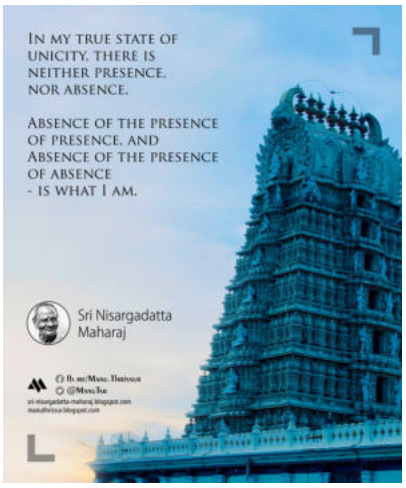
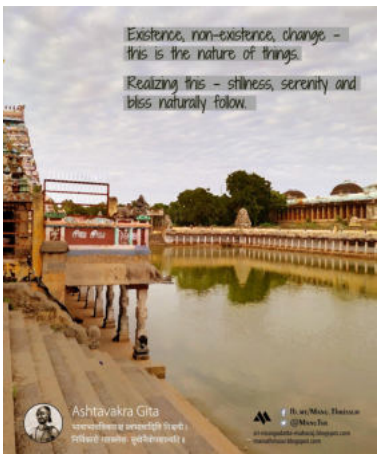

IN MY TRUE STATE OF UNICITY, THERE IS NEITHER PRESENCE, NOR ABSENCE.
ABSENCE OF THE PRESENCE OF PRESENCE, AND ABSENCE OF THE PRESENCE OF ABSENCE - IS WHAT I AM.
Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj


Existence, non-existence, change - this is the nature of things.
Realizing this - stillness, serenity and bliss naturally follow.
Ashtavakra Gita

Ref: innerspiritualawakening.com

70 Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj Quotes on Consciousness & Awareness

1. Once you know with absolute certainty that nothing can trouble you but your own imagination, you come to disregard your desires and fears, concepts and ideas and live by truth alone.

2. When I say ‘I am’, I do not mean a separate entity with a body as its nucleus, I mean the totality of being, the ocean of consciousness, the entire universe of all that is known. I have nothing to desire for I am complete forever

3. Who is going to give you eternal peace? It is only the sun, that ‘I am’. If you embrace that Self-effulgent sun everything else will go, but you will prevail eternally.

4. I live on courage. Courage is my essence, which is love of life. I am free of memories and anticipations, unconcerned with what I am and what I am not

5. A quiet mind is all you need. All else will happen rightly, once your mind is quiet. As the sun on rising makes the world active, so does self-awareness affect changes in the mind. In the light of calm and steady self-awareness inner energies wake up and work miracles without effort on your part.

6. The beginning of duality is when you know you are. This is the primary duality, the very source of illusion.

7. All you have to do is to give attention to the obstacles created by the foolish mind.

8. It is only during the duration of the beingness that the world and creation is. This power is the faith in the primordial concept ‘I am’, and that is the concept that weaves the web of creation. The entire manifestation is an appearance in this concept.

9. Love is not selective, desire is selective. In love there are no strangers.

10. Awareness is primordial; it is the original state, beginning-less, endless, uncaused, unsupported, without parts, without change. Consciousness is on contact, a reflection against a surface, a state of duality. There can be no consciousness without awareness, but there can be awareness without consciousness, as in deep sleep. Awareness is absolute, consciousness is relative to its content; consciousness is always of something.

11. All you need is to get rid of the tendency to define yourself. All definitions apply to your body only and its expressions. Once this obsession with the body goes, you will revert to your natural state, spontaneously and effortlessly.

12. All you need is already within you, only you must approach your self with reverence and love. Self-condemnation and self-distrust are grievous errors.

13. You must maintain this knowledge ‘I am’ in proper order. All the dirt, which is not the towel, should be removed. Similarly ‘I am’ is the tool through which you get all the knowledge. You worship that ‘I am’, remove all the adulteration, the dirt.

14. If you want to remember this visit, if you have love for me, remember this ‘I am’ principle and without the command or direction of this principle, do nothing.

15. There is no such thing as a person. There are only restrictions and limitations. The sum total of these defines the person. You think you know yourself when you know what you are. But you never know who you are.

16. The world is like a sheet of paper on which something is typed. The reading and the meaning will vary with the reader, but the paper is the common factor, always present, rarely perceived. When the ribbon is removed, typing leaves no trace on the paper. So is my mind – the impressions keep on coming, but no trace is left.

17. Put your awareness to work, not your mind. The mind is not the right instrument for this task. The timeless can be reached only by the timeless. Your body and your mind are born subject to time; only awareness is timeless, even in the now.

18. People are afraid to die, because they do not know what is death. The gnani has died before his death, he saw that there was nothing to be afraid of. The moment you know your real being, you are afraid of nothing. Death gives freedom and power.

19. All you need is to stop searching outside for what can be found only within. Set your vision right before you operate. You are suffering from acute misapprehension . Clarify your mind, purify your heart, sanctify your life – this is the quickest way to a change in your world.

20. Truth is not a reward for good behaviour, nor a prize for passing some tests. It cannot be brought about. It is the primary, the unborn, the ancient source of all that is. You are eligible because you are. You need not merit truth. It is your own….Stand still, be quiet.

21. Cooperate with your destiny, don’t go against it, don’t thwart it. Allow it to fulfil itself.

22. Think of that which is the centre of the cosmos; don’t let your attention stray in any way from this knowledge of beingness, “I Am.”

23. All you want is to be happy. All your desires, whatever they may be, are longing for happiness. Basically, you wish yourself well…desire by itself is not wrong. It is life itself, the urge to grow in knowledge and experience. It is choices you make that are wrong. To imagine that some little thing-food, sex, power, fame-will make you happy is to deceive oneself. Only something as vast and deep as your real self can make you truly and lastingly happy.

24. You have to meditate. It won’t be available free. The necessary threshold is through consciousness only. You have to imbibe and be consciousness. In the process of being in the consciousness, you come out of it, and there you see; and meditation is the only remedy.

25. To know yourself, be yourself. To be yourself, stop imagining yourself to be this or that. Just be. Let your true nature emerge. Don't disturb your mind with seeking.

26. If you sit here quietly, being one with the knowledge 'I am', then you are not concerned with the world or what goes on in the world. It is only when the consciousness starts operating and there are various movements in the consciousness that the behaviour in the world takes place. When I am not conscious of the existence of the body, experiences are not registered.

27. Once you realise that the world is your own projection, you are free of it. You need not free yourself of a world that does not exist, except in your own imagination! However is the picture, beautiful or ugly, you are painting it and you are not bound by it. Realise that there is nobody to force it on you, that it is due to the habit of taking the imaginary to be real. See the imaginary as imaginary and be free of fear.

28. When the centre of selfishness is no longer, all desires for pleasure and fear of pain cease; one is no longer interested in being happy; beyond happiness there is pure intensity, inexhaustible energy, the ecstasy of giving from a perennial source."

29. Look at yourself steadily – it is enough. The door that locks you in is also the door that lets you out. The 'I am' is the door. Stay at it until it opens. As a matter of fact, it is open, only you are not at it. You are waiting at the non-existent painted doors, which will never open.

30. In nature nothing is at standstill, everything pulsates, appears and disappears. Heart, breath, digestion, sleep and waking – birth and death – everything comes and goes in waves. Rhythm, periodicity, harmonious alternation of extremes is the rule. No use rebelling against the very pattern of life.

31. The witness is both unreal and real. The last remnant of the illusion, the first touch of the real. To say: I am only the witness is both false and true, false because of the 'I am', true because of the witness. It is better to say: 'there is witnessing'. The moment you say 'I am', the entire universe comes into being along with its creator.

32. To know the self as the only reality and all else as temporal and transient is freedom, peace and joy. It is all very simple. Instead of seeing things as imagined, learn to see them as they are. When you can see everything as it is, you will also see yourself as you are. It is like cleansing a mirror. The same mirror that shows you the world as it is, will also show you your own face. The thought 'I am' is the polishing cloth. Use it.

33. To exist means to be something, a thing, a feeling, a thought, an idea. All existence is particular. Only being is universal, in the sense that every being is compatible with every other being. Existences clash, being – never. Existence means becoming, change, birth and death, and birth again, while in being there is silent peace.

34. Immortality is freedom from the feeling: 'I am'. Yet it is not extinction. On the contrary, it is a state infinitely more real, aware and happy than you can possibly think of. Only self-consciousness is no more. Who would remain even to say 'I am the witness'? When

there is no ‘I am’, where is the witness? In the timeless state there is no self to take refuge in.

35. Pain is physical; suffering is mental. Beyond the mind there is no suffering. Pain is essential for the survival of the body, but none compels you to suffer. Suffering is due entirely to clinging or resisting; it is a sign of our unwillingness to move on, to flow with life.

36. There must be love in the relation between the person who says ‘I am’ and the observer of the ‘I am’. As long as the observer, the inner self; the ‘higher’ self considers himself apart from the observed, the ‘lower’ self, despises it and condemns it, the situation is hopeless.

37. The state of craving for anything blocks all deeper experience. Nothing of value can happen to a mind which knows exactly what it wants. For nothing the mind can visualise and want is of much value.

38. What is wrong is that you consider yourself to be limited to this body and shape. What knowledge I try to give is given to the knowledge I am in each of you, which is the same. If you try to get the knowledge as an individual you will never get it.

39. one is always free. You are both conscious and free to be conscious. Nobody can take this away from you.

40. Realise that your world is only a reflection of yourself and stop finding fault with the reflection. Attend to yourself, set yourself right; mentally and emotionally. The physical self will follow automatically.

41. Most essential is that knowledge ‘I am’. Claim it, appropriate it as your own. If that is not there, nothing is. Knowledge of all stages will be obtained only with the aid of this knowledge ‘I am’ From the Absolute no-knowing state, spontaneously this consciousness ‘I am’ has appeared – no reason, no cause.

42. The knowledge I am is not a thought but observes thought. The innermost, subtlest principle is that gnawing principle I am, I am without words, by which you know you are. It has no form or image; it is only beingness, the love to be.

43. First know your own mind and you will find that the question of other minds does not arise at all, for there are no other people. You are the common factor, the only link between the minds, Being is consciousness; ‘I am’ applies to all.

44. All your experiences and visions depend on your knowledge I am and this itself is going to dissolve. For this knowledge there are no customers, no devotees, because they want something concrete in their hand, but when your knowingness itself is going to dissolve, is it possible to hold on to something?

45. Your own self is your ultimate teacher (sadguru). The outer teacher (Guru) is merely a milestone. It is only your inner teacher that will walk with you to the goal, for he is the goal.

46. Learn to look without imagination, to listen without distortion: that is all. Stop attributing names and shapes to the essentially nameless and formless, realise that every mode of perception is subjective, that what is seen or heard, touched or smelt, felt or thought, expected or imagined, is in the mind and not in reality, and you will experience peace and freedom from fear.

47. When ‘I am myself’ goes, ‘I am all’ comes. When the ‘I am all’ goes, ‘I am’ comes. When even ‘I am’ goes, reality alone is, and in it every ‘I am’ is preserved and glorified.

48. I repeatedly tell you that there is nothing save this consciousness, the knowledge I am. if you feel like worshipping something, worship that. I am giving blessings. Blessings mean what? I am giving confidence and courage.

49. When you were unaware of this message of ‘I am’ how did you function? The question I put, nobody can answer. All of your great scholars, people with a lot of knowledge, have gone into quietude.

50. As long as you are wearing this concept I am, you will be involved with all the concepts. When this concept I am departs there will be no memory left that I was and I had those experiences; the very memory will be erased.

51. ‘I am’ itself is God. The seeking itself is God. In seeking you discover that you are neither the body nor the mind, and the love of the self in you is for the self in all. The two are one. The consciousness in you and the consciousness in me, apparently two, really one, seek unity and that is love.

52. The capital we have is the knowledge I am. But what have we done? We have handed over that knowledge to the body and we say I am the body. Thereby we have reduced the totality, the limitless, to the limited, a specified insignificant body. And that is why, being unable to give up this association with the body, we are afraid of dying.

53. The sense ‘I am’ is composed of pure light and the sense of being. The ‘I’ is there even without the ‘am’. So is the pure light there, whether you say ‘I’ or not. Become aware of that pure light and you will never lose it. The beingness in being, the awareness in consciousness, the interest in every experience – that is not describable, yet perfectly accessible, for there is nothing else.

54. The scriptures say that we have our karma and our sin and that is why we are here, but this is for the ignorant masses. One who has realized the self-knowledge, for him these stories are of no use.

55. There is no such thing as peace of mind. Mind means disturbance; restlessness itself is mind.(…) Examine closely and you will see that the mind is seething with thoughts. It may occasionally go blank, but it does it for a time and reverts to its usual restlessness.

56. Whatever is called God or Self is because there is the beingness, the feeling that ‘I am’. That is the fundamental principle, the basis of all your knowledge, but you are identifying yourself with the body.

57. Self-remembrance, awareness of “I am’ ripens man powerfully and speedily. Give up all ideas about yourself and simply be. Stop making use of your mind and see what happens. Do this one thing thoroughly. That is all.

58. A liberated man is extremely law-abiding. But his laws are the laws of his real self, not of his society. These he observes, or breaks, according to circumstances and necessity. But he will never be fanciful and disorderly.”

59. Pleasure puts you to sleep and pain wakes you up. If you don’t want to suffer, don’t go to sleep.

60. Look at your mind dispassionately; this is enough to calm it. When it is quiet, you can go beyond it. Do not keep it busy all the time. Stop it – and just be. If you give it a rest, it will settle down and recover its purity and strength. Constant thinking makes it decay.

61. If you want to know your true nature, you must have yourself in mind all the time, until the secret of your being stands revealed.

62. You want to know yourself. For this keep steadily in the focus of consciousness, the only clue you have: your certainty of being. Be with it, play with it, ponder over it, delve deeply into it, till the shell of ignorance breaks open and you emerge into the realm of reality.

63. The concentration on ‘I am’ is a form of attention. Give your undivided attention to the most important thing in your life – yourself. Of your personal universe you are the centre – without knowing the centre what else can you know?

64. All that a guru can tell you is: ‘My dear Sir, you are quite mistaken about yourself. You are not the person you take yourself to be.

65. You may die a hundred deaths without a break in the mental turmoil. Or, you may keep your body and die only in the mind. The death of the mind is the birth of wisdom.

66. It is always the false that makes you suffer, the false desires and fears, the false values and ideas, the false relationships between people. Abandon the false and you are free of pain; truth makes you happy, truth liberates.

67. Unless you make tremendous efforts, you will not be convinced that effort will take you nowhere. The self is so self-confident that unless it is totally discouraged it will not give up. Mere verbal conviction is not enough. Hard facts alone can show the absolute nothingness of the self-image.

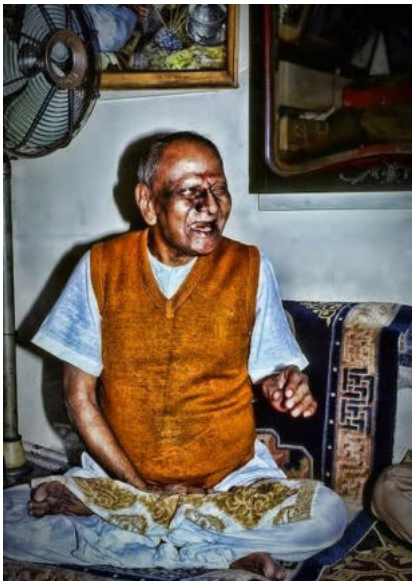
68. If you seek reality you must set yourself free of all backgrounds, of all cultures, of all patterns of thinking and feeling. Even the idea of being man or woman, or even human should be discarded. The ocean of life contains all, not only humans. So, first of all abandon all self-identification, stop thinking of yourself as such-and-such or so-and-so, this or that.

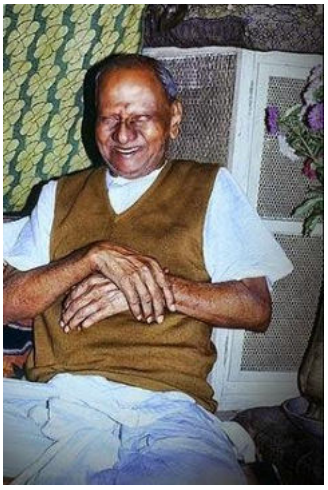
69. Everything is a play of ideas. In the state free from ideation (nirvikalpa samadhi) nothing is perceived. The root idea is ‘I am’. It shatters the state of pure consciousness and is followed by the innumerable sensations and perceptions, feelings and ideas, which in their totality constitute God and His world. The ‘I am’ remains as the witness, but it is by the will of God that everything happens.

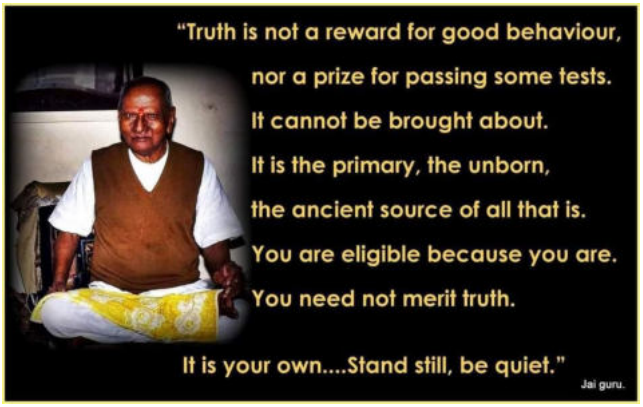
70. It is always the false that makes you suffer, the false desires and fears, the false values and ideas, the false relationships between people. Abandon the false and you are free of pain; truth makes you happy, truth liberates.

Ref: FaceBook page: Nisargadatta Maharaj:

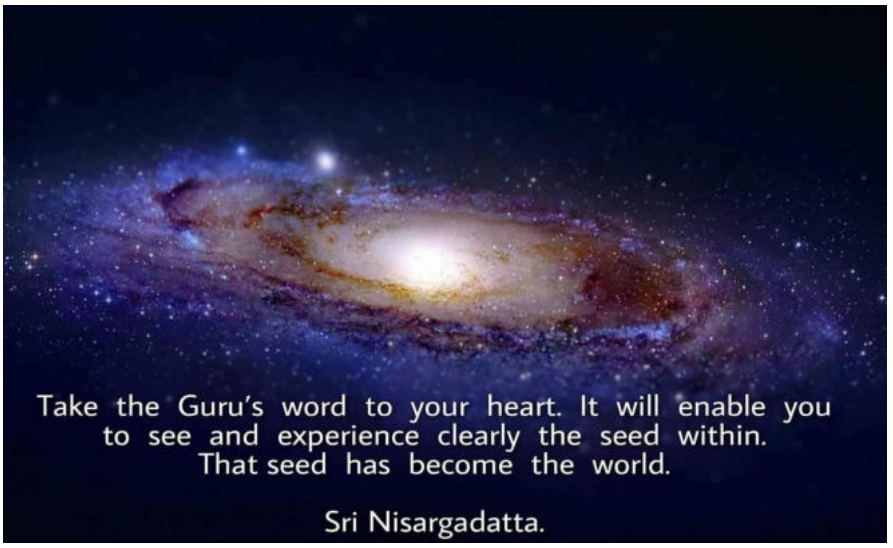
PHOTOS:

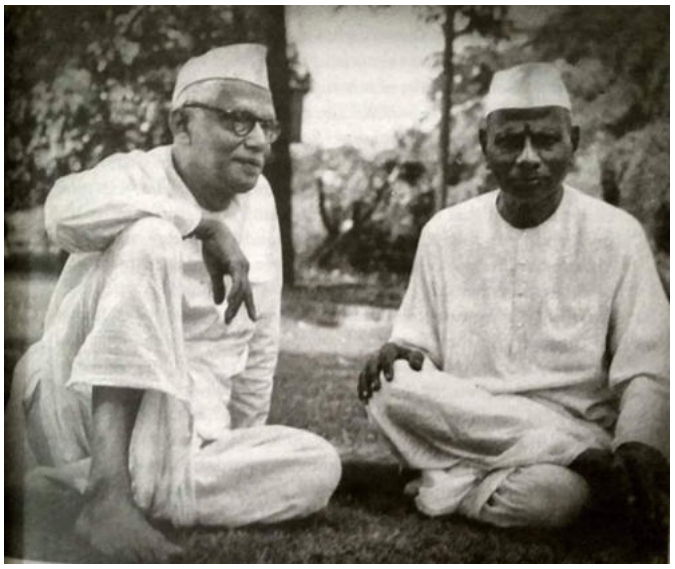


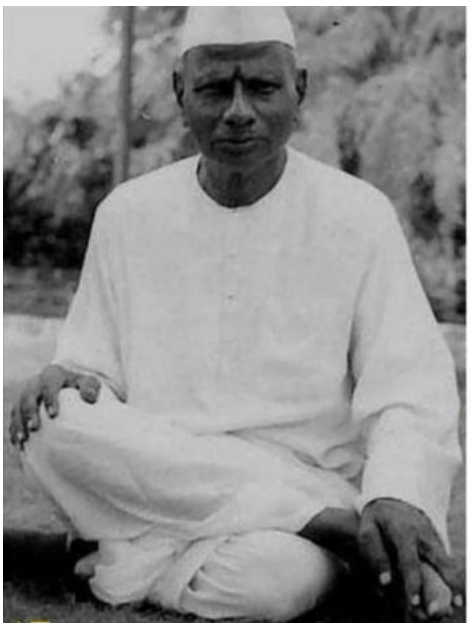


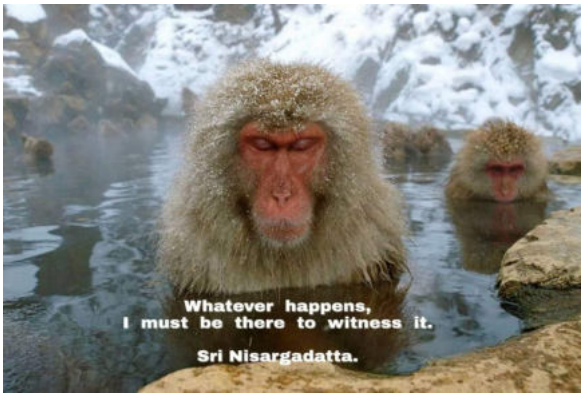

"Truth is not a reward for good behaviour,
nor a prize for passing some tests.
It cannot be brought about.
It is the primary, the unborn,
the ancient source of all that is.
You are eligible because you are.
You need not merit truth.
It is your own....Stand still, be quiet."
Jai guru.

Jiva is perfect and yet he is moaning with the fear of death.
The sage feels compassion for the jiva; for its condition.
That is the reason why he sometimes gets angry and impatient.
Sri Nisargadatta.

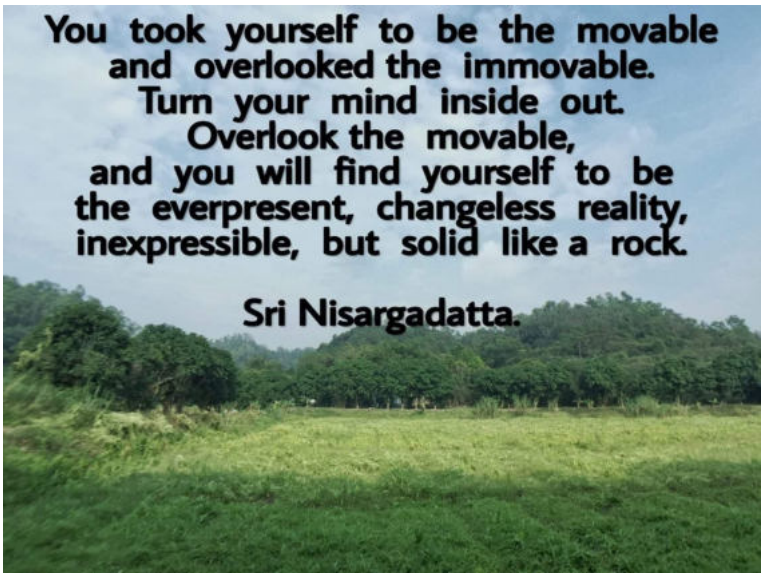

Take the Guru's word to your heart. It will enable you
to see and experience clearly the seed within.
That seed has become the world.
Sri Nisargadatta.

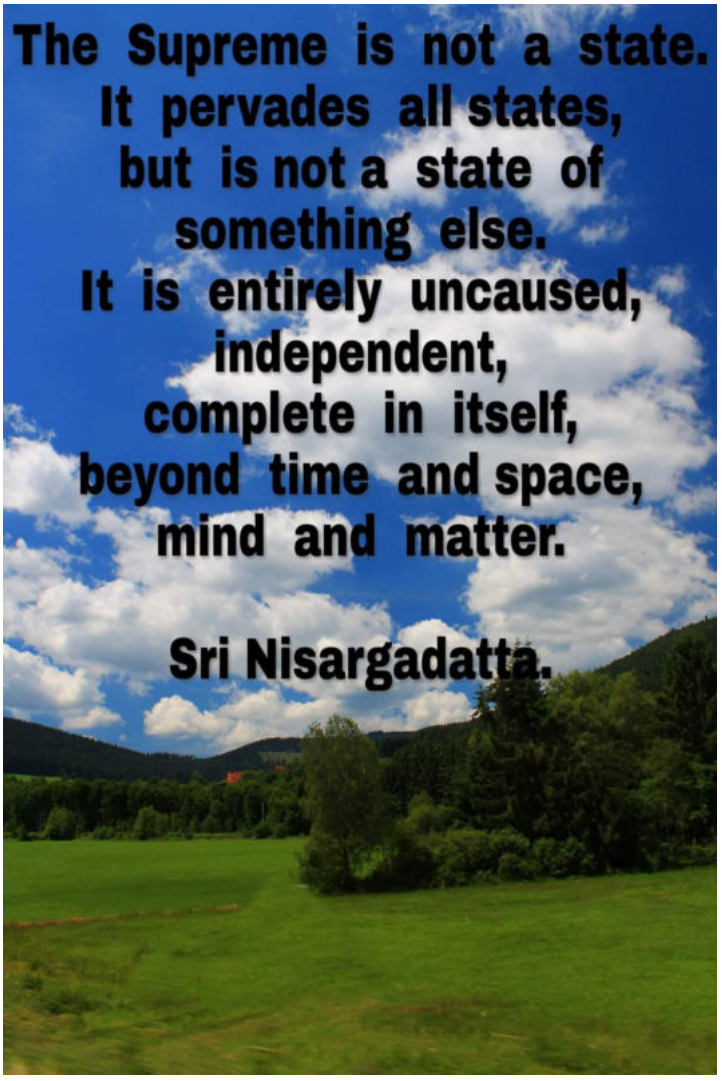


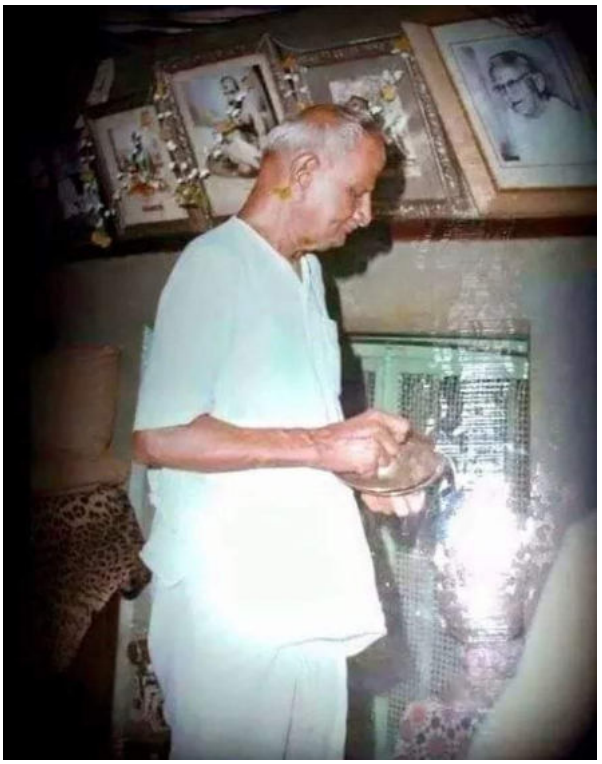


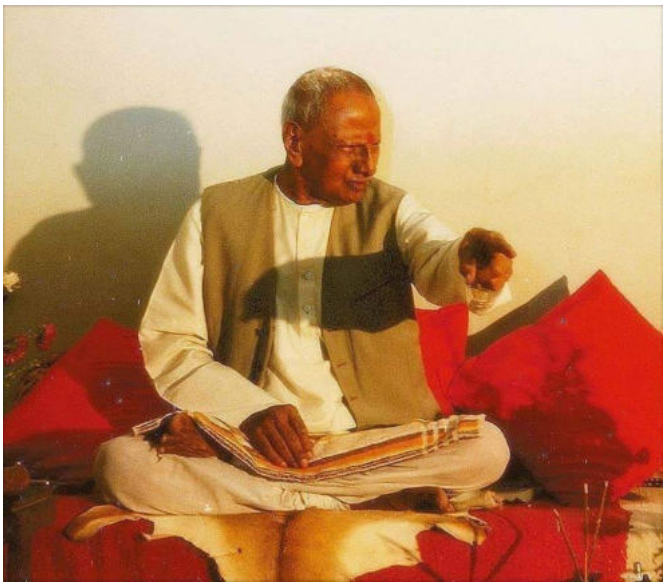

Whatever happens,
I must be there to witness it.
Sri Nisargadatta.

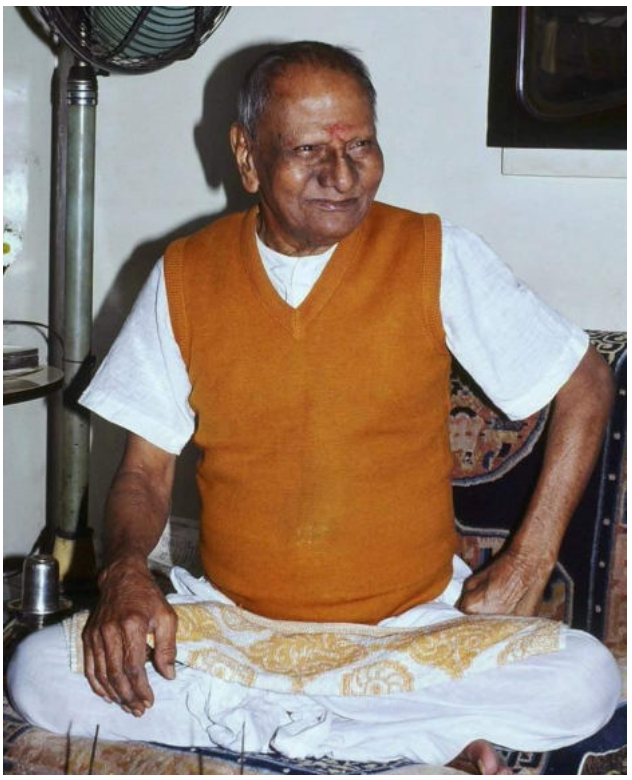
Self realization is the realization of the fact
that realization is already there.
Ignorance was never there.
Sri Ramakant Maharaj.


You took yourself to be the movable
and overlooked the immovable.
Turn your mind inside out.
Overlook the movable,
and you will find yourself to be
the everpresent, changeless reality,
inexpressible, but solid like a rock.
Sri Nisargadatta.

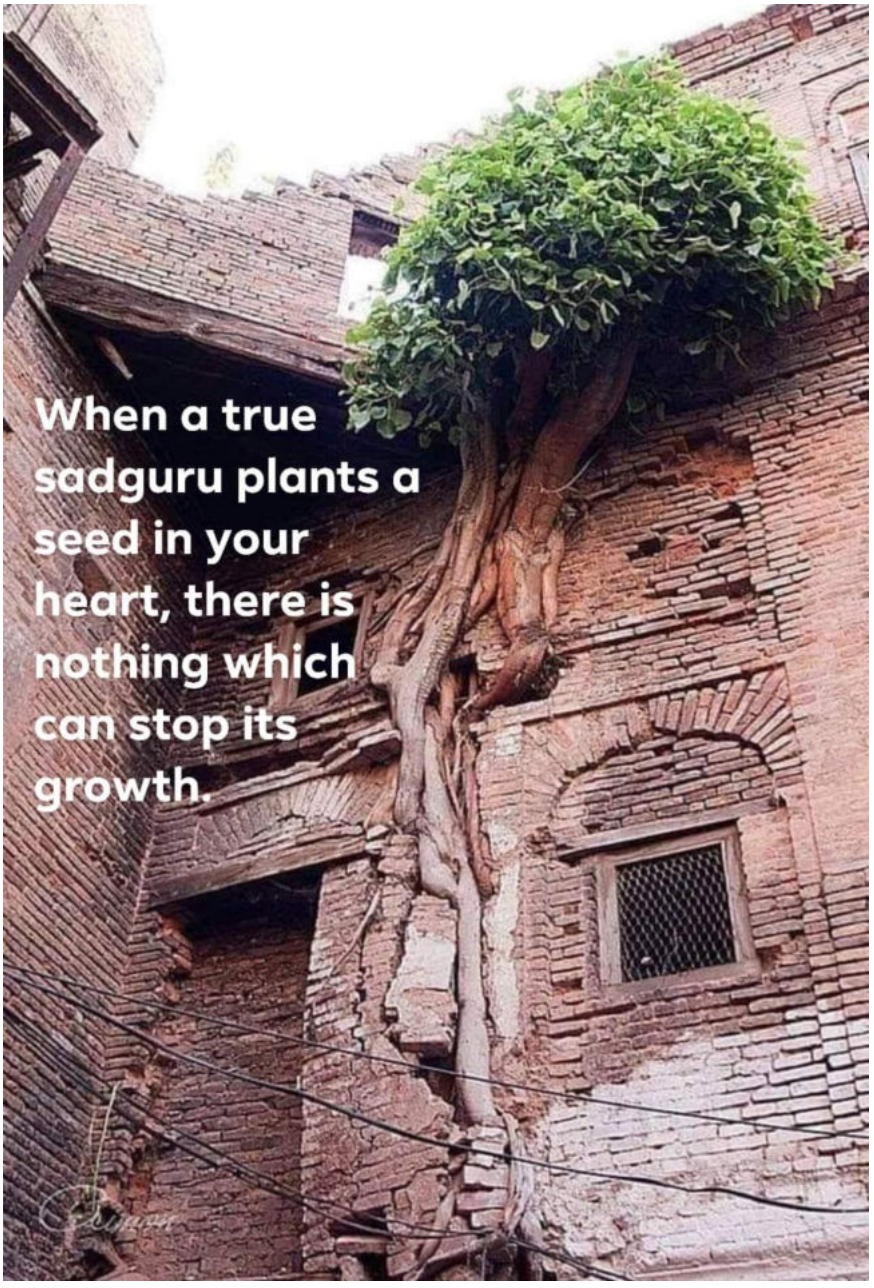

The Supreme is not a state.
It pervades all states,
but is not a state of
something else.
It is entirely uncaused,
independent,
complete in itself,
beyond time and space,
mind and matter.
Sri Nisargadatta.

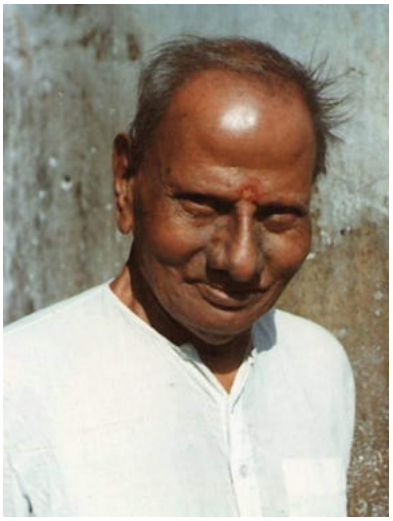






"Save all your energies and time for breaking the wall your mind has built around you."
Nisargadatta Maharaj
TracyAMalone


When a true sadguru plants a seed in your heart, there is nothing which can stop its growth.



FB videos:

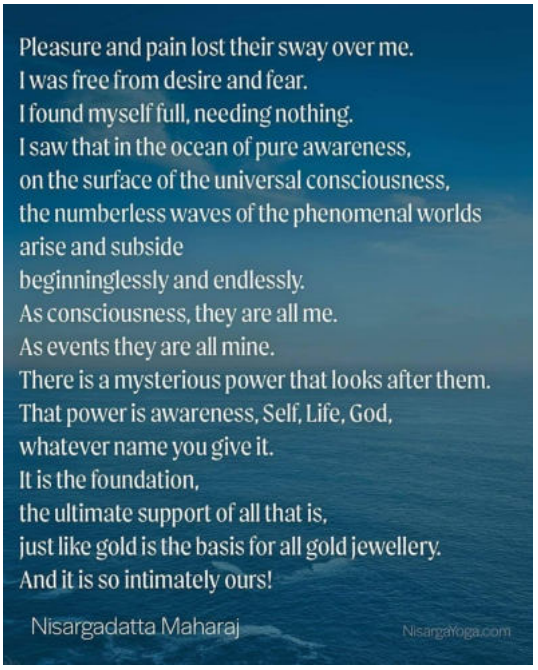
Art of meditation: https://fb.watch/b3ssHTSl-U/

Untitled: https://fb.watch/b3sx9H10Ap/

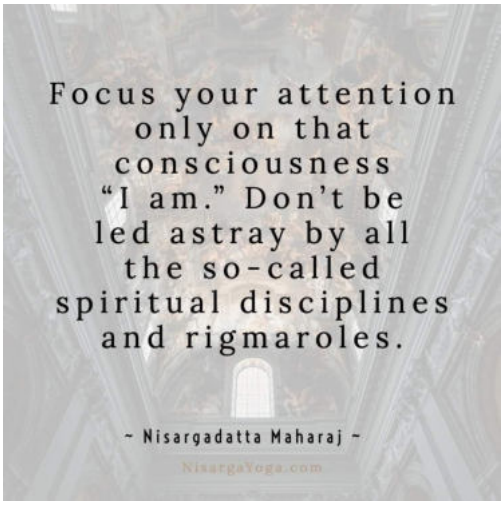
Untitled: https://fb.watch/b3szaZ_7H8/

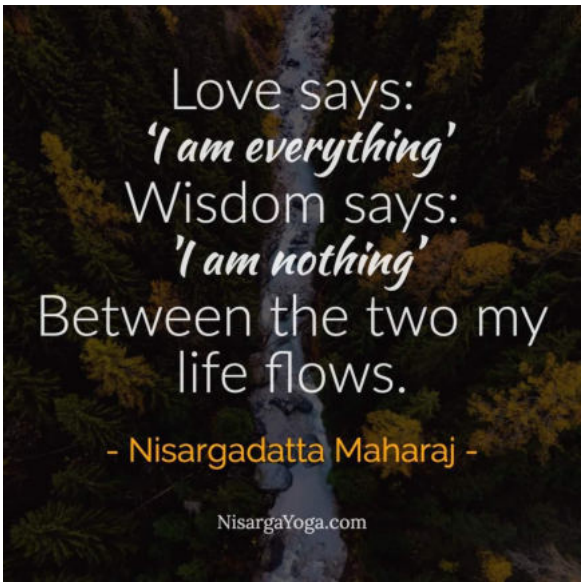
Ref: FaceBook page: Nisarga Yoga:

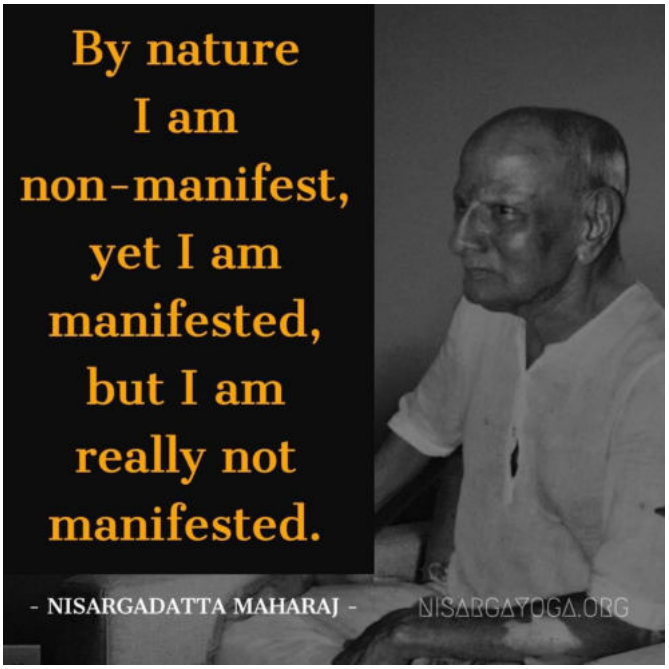
Photos:

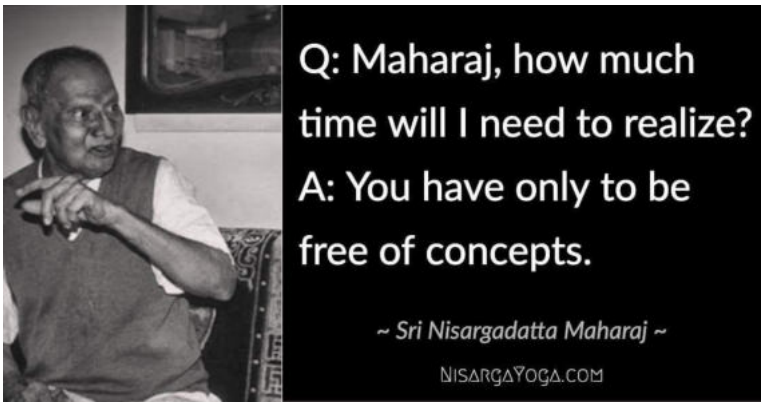

Pleasure and pain lost their sway over me.
I was free from desire and fear.
I found myself full, needing nothing.
I saw that in the ocean of pure awareness,
on the surface of the universal consciousness,
the numberless waves of the phenomenal worlds
arise and subside
beginninglessly and endlessly.
As consciousness, they are all me.
As events they are all mine.
There is a mysterious power that looks after them.
That power is awareness, Self, Life, God,
whatever name you give it.
It is the foundation,
the ultimate support of all that is,
just like gold is the basis for all gold jewellery.
And it is so intimately ours!
Nisargadatta Maharaj
NisargaYoga.com

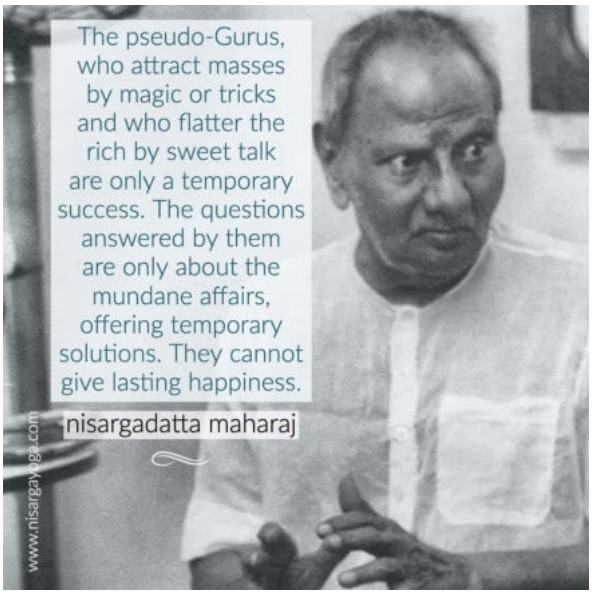
You are already complete
You are already whole
And if it feels as if something is blocking your wholeness
Let's meet, sit together and inquire...
see: nisargayoga.org


Focus your attention only on that consciousness "I am." Don't be led astray by all the so-called spiritual disciplines and rigmaroles.
~ Nisargadatta Maharaj ~
NisargaYoga.com

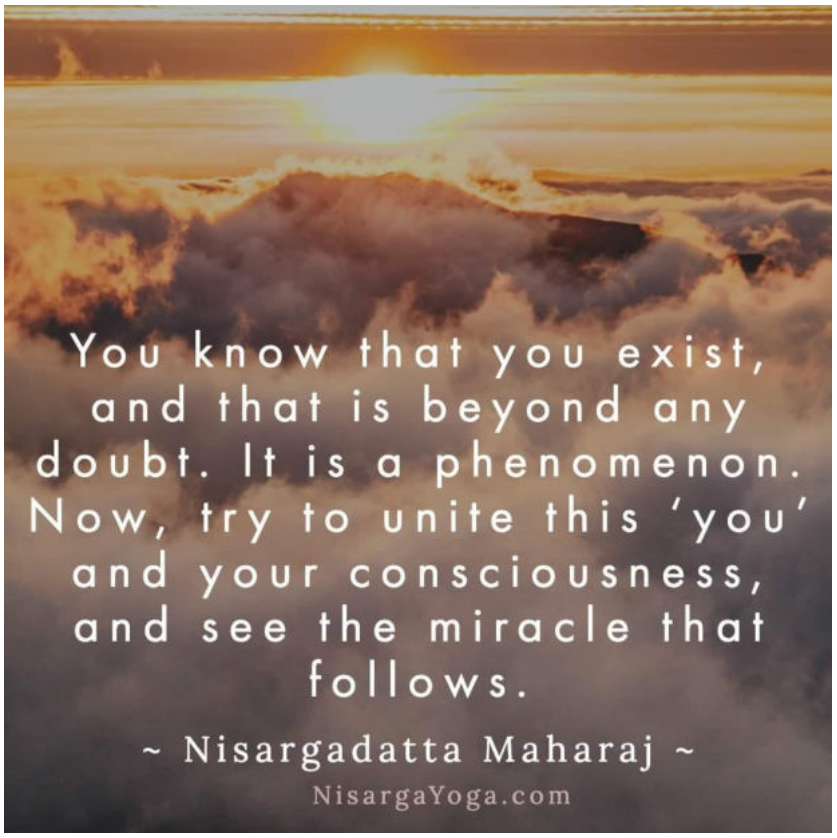

Love says:
'I am everything'
Wisdom says:
'I am nothing'
Between the two my life flows.
- Nisargadatta Maharaj -
NisargaYoga.com


By nature I am non-manifest, yet I am manifested, but I am really not manifested.
- NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ -
NISARGAYOGA.ORG

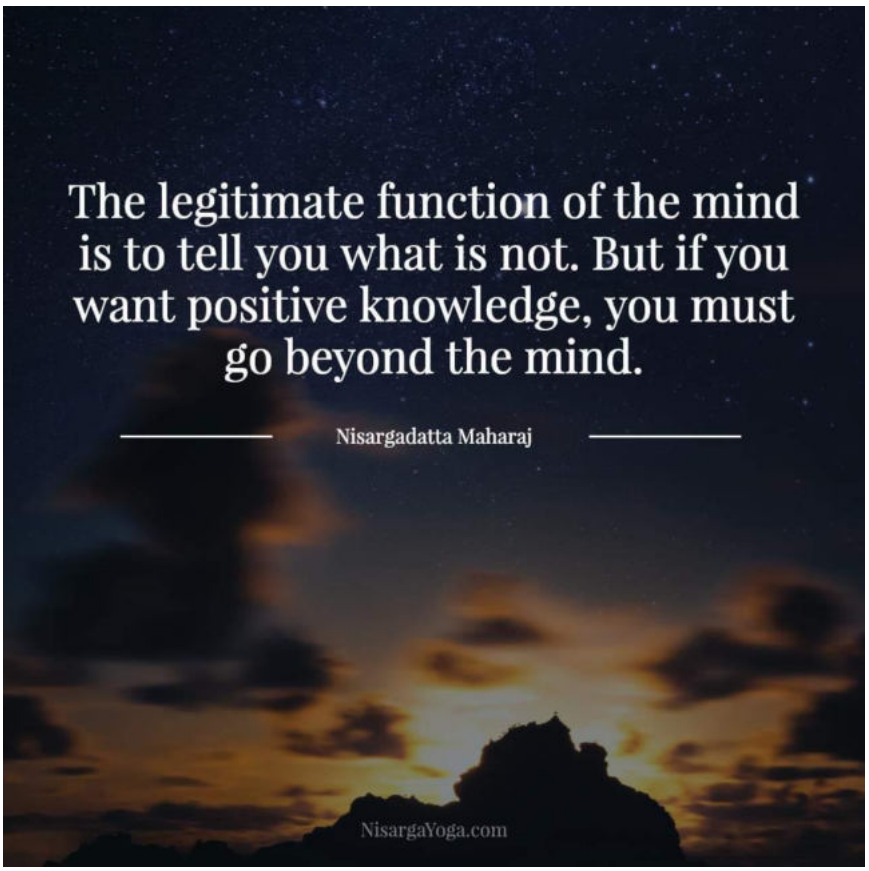

Q: Maharaj, how much time will I need to realize?
A: You have only to be free of concepts.
~ Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj ~
NISARGAYOGA.COM

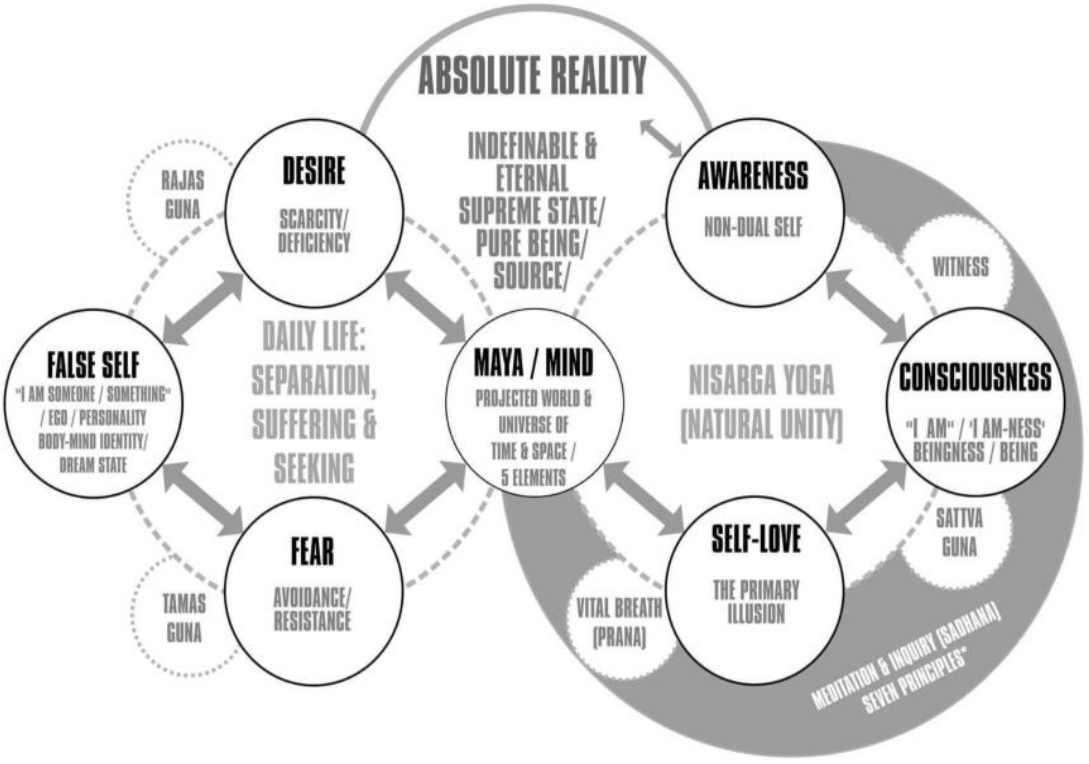

The pseudo-Gurus, who attract masses by magic or tricks and who flatter the rich by sweet talk are only a temporary success. The questions answered by them are only about the mundane affairs, offering temporary solutions. They cannot give lasting happiness.
nisargadatta maharaj
www.nisargayoga.com

www.nisargayoga.com
Wake up, know yourself, be yourself.
nisargadatta maharaj


You know that you exist, and that is beyond any doubt. It is a phenomenon. Now, try to unite this 'you' and your consciousness, and see the miracle that follows.
~ Nisargadatta Maharaj ~
NisargaYoga.com

Time is the child of a barren woman.
Nisargadatta Maharaj
NisargaYoga.com

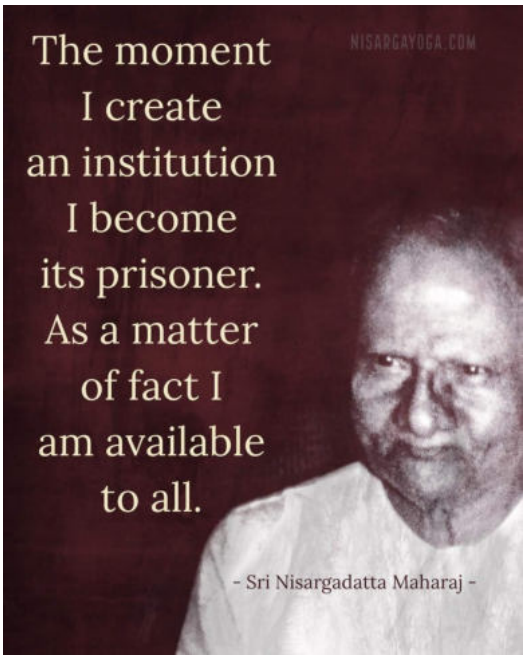

The legitimate function of the mind is to tell you what is not. But if you want positive knowledge, you must go beyond the mind.
Nisargadatta Maharaj
NisargaYoga.com

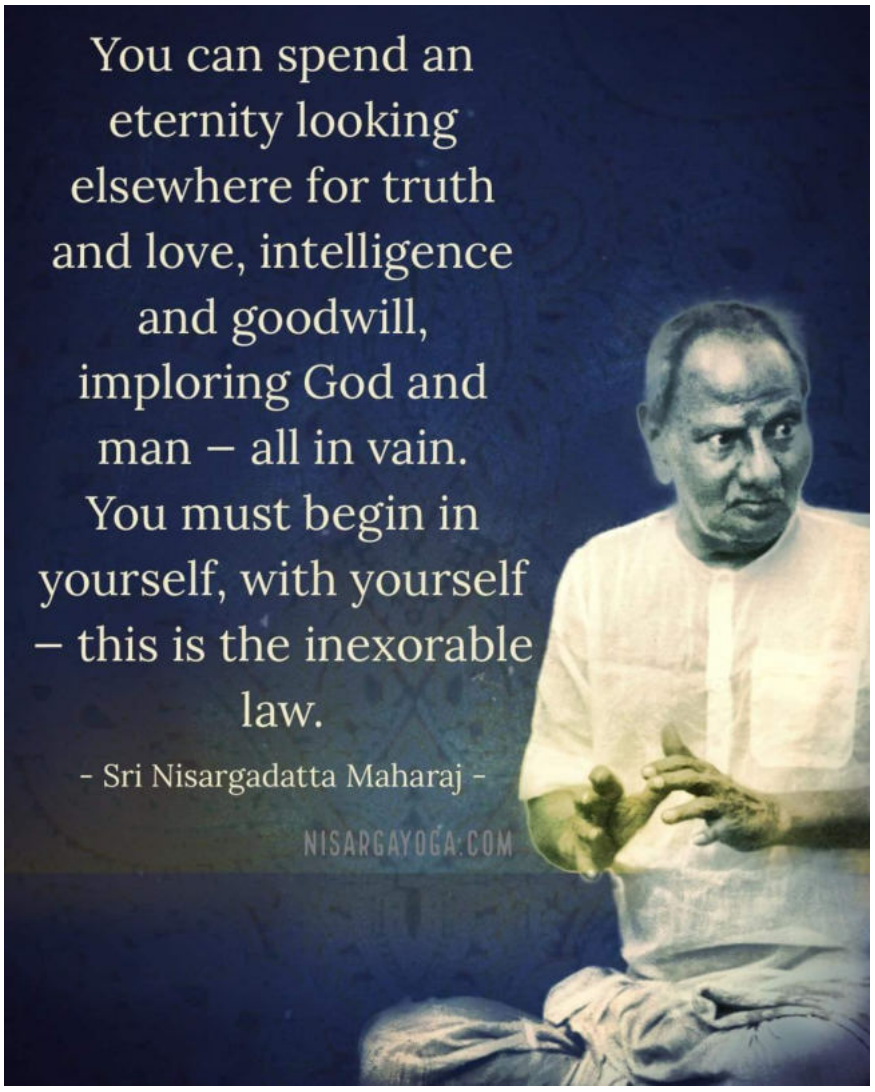


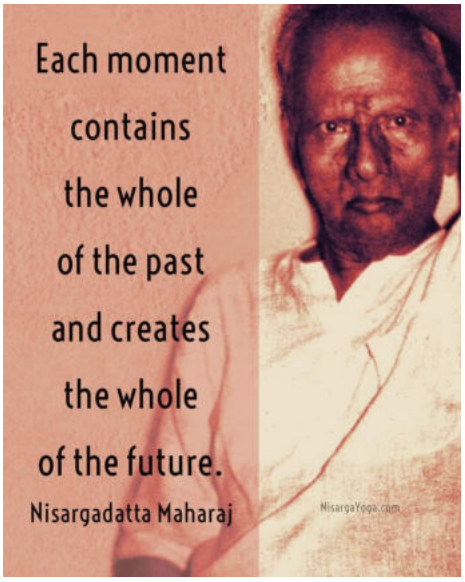
*SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF NISARGA YOGA

Non-identification and right understanding, Interest and earnestness, Spontaneity and effortlessness, Attentiveness to being, Right action, Going within to go beyond, Awareness of Self

Influenced by the teaching of Nisargadatta Maharaj, prepared by Nic Higham www.nisargayoga.com


The moment
I create
an institution
I become
its prisoner.
As a matter
of fact I
am available
to all.
- Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj -
NISARGAYOGA.COM


You can spend an
eternity looking
elsewhere for truth
and love, intelligence
and goodwill,
imploring God and
man – all in vain.
You must begin in
yourself, with yourself
– this is the inexorable
law.
- Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj -
NISARGAYOGA.COM


Each moment
contains
the whole
of the past
and creates
the whole
of the future.
Nisargadatta Maharaj
NisargaYoga.com

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

There are so many things you are doing without knowing how to do it. You digest, you circulate your blood and lymph, you move your muscles – all without knowing how. In the same way, you perceive, you feel, you think without knowing the why and how of it. Similarly, you are yourself without knowing it.

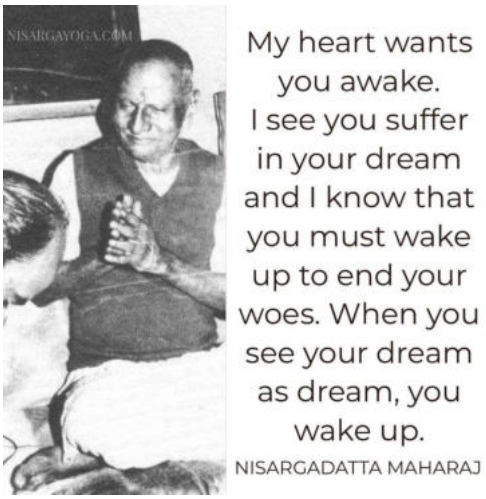
Q: I have no spiritual background at all. I have only read Maharaj's book. How should I start?
M: When you see something you are not that. You see the body therefore you are not that. You see the mind, this thought flow, therefore you are not that. Like that, eliminate what you are not and just be what you are.

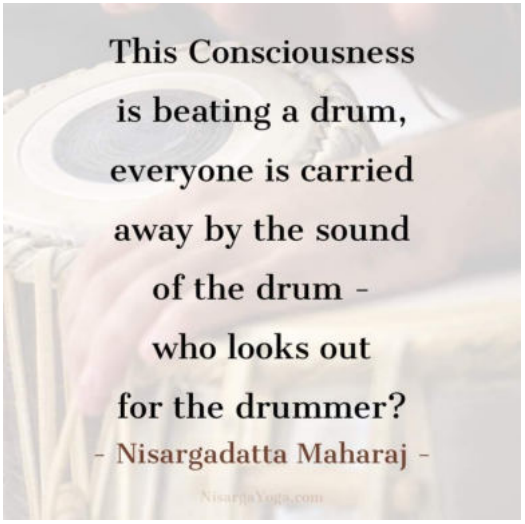
NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ

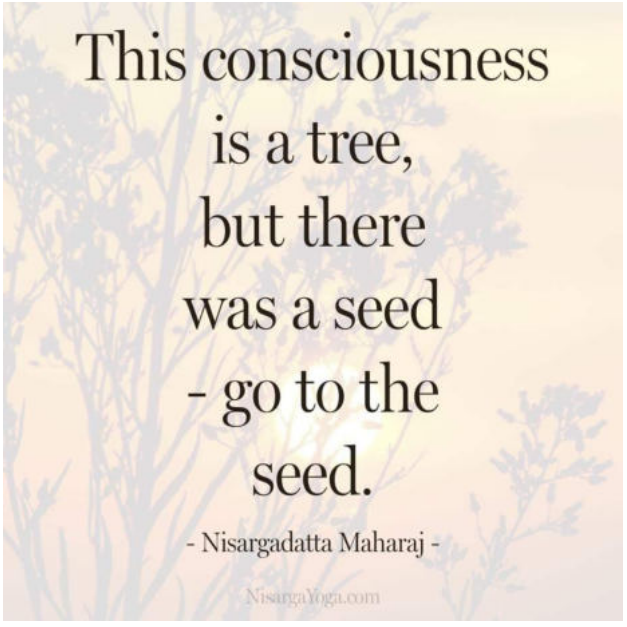
"...imagination alone is the root cause of everything, and if it is removed at the root, that is itself the realization of Brahman."

Saint Shri Samartha Ramdas

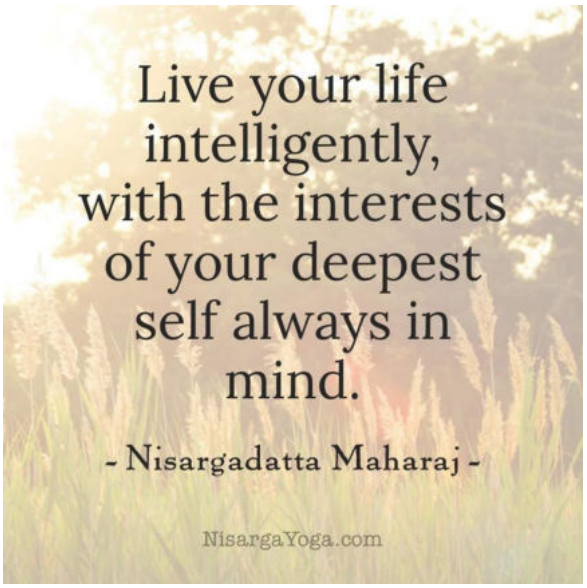
NisargaYoga.com

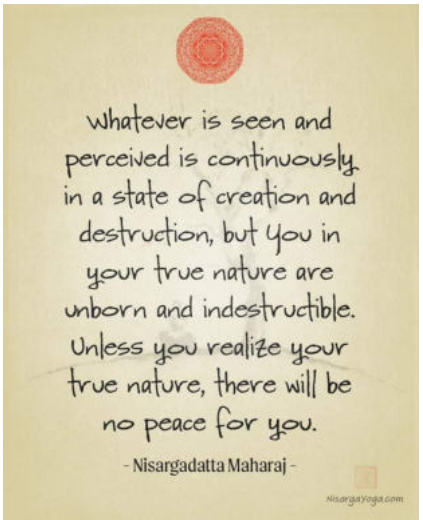

NISARGAYOGA.COM
My heart wants you awake. I see you suffer in your dream and I know that you must wake up to end your woes. When you see your dream as dream, you wake up.
NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ

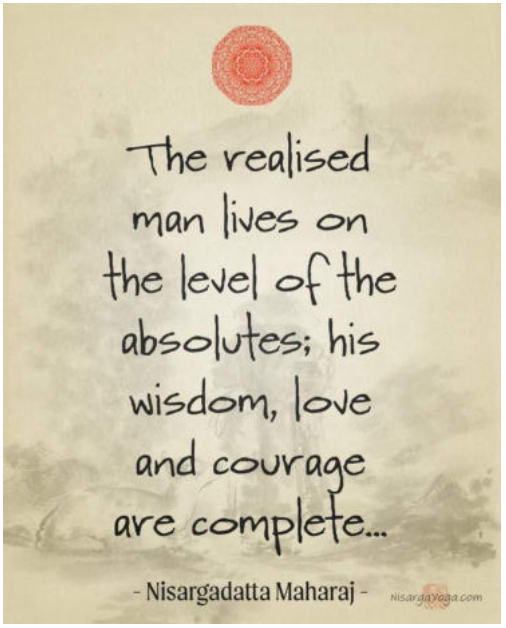

This Consciousness is beating a drum, everyone is carried away by the sound of the drum - who looks out for the drummer?
- Nisargadatta Maharaj -
NisargaYoga.com

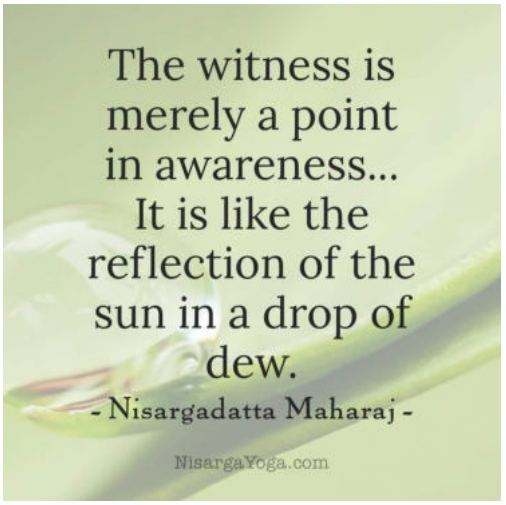

This consciousness is a tree, but there was a seed - go to the seed.
- Nisargadatta Maharaj -
NisargaYoga.com

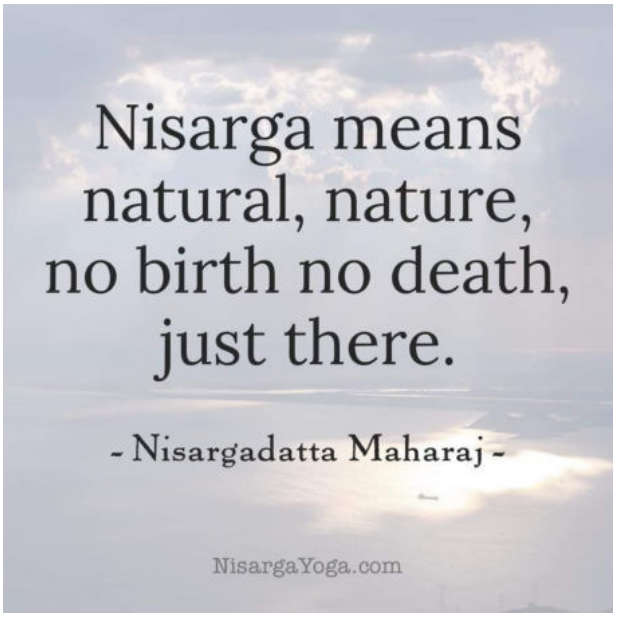
Seek
within.
Your own
self is
your best
friend.
- Nisargadatta Maharaj -
NisargaYoga.com

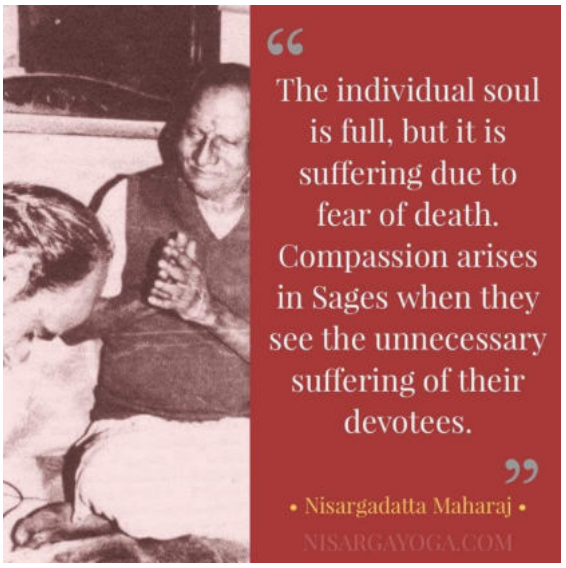

Live your life
intelligently,
with the interests
of your deepest
self always in
mind.
- Nisargadatta Maharaj -
NisargaYoga.com

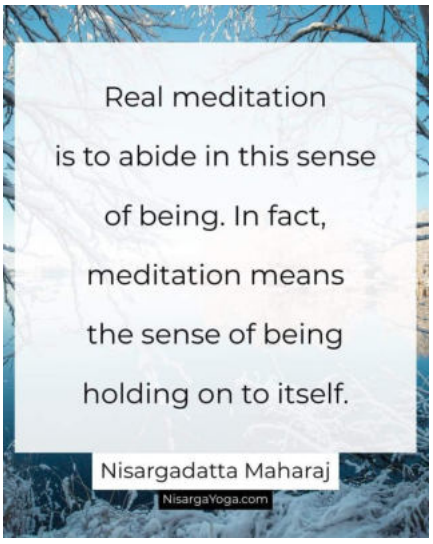

whatever is seen and
perceived is continuously
in a state of creation and
destruction, but you in
your true nature are
unborn and indestructible.
Unless you realize your
true nature, there will be
no peace for you.
- Nisargadatta Maharaj -

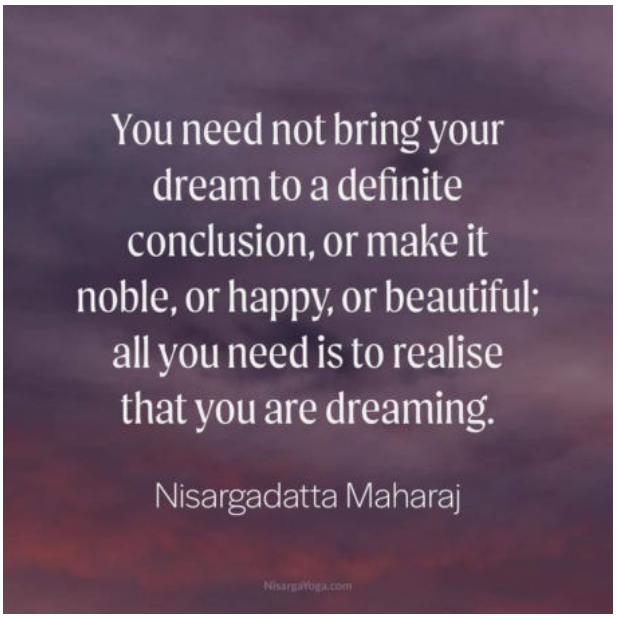

The realised
man lives on
the level of the
absolutes; his
wisdom, love
and courage
are complete...
- Nisargadatta Maharaj -


The witness is
merely a point
in awareness...
It is like the
reflection of the
sun in a drop of
dew.
- Nisargadatta Maharaj -
NisargaYoga.com

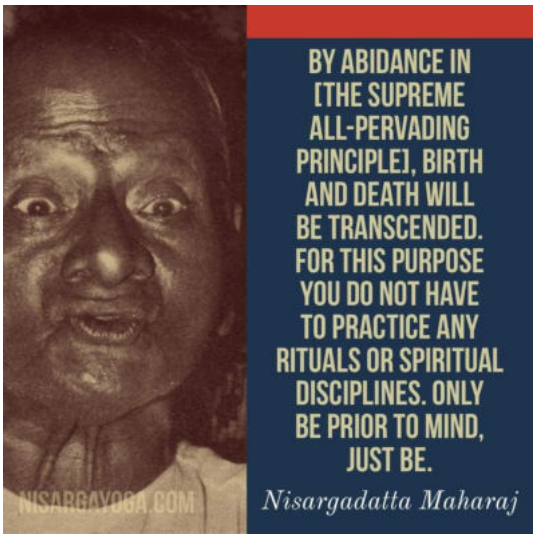

Nisarga means
natural, nature,
no birth no death,
just there.
- Nisargadatta Maharaj -
NisargaYoga.com

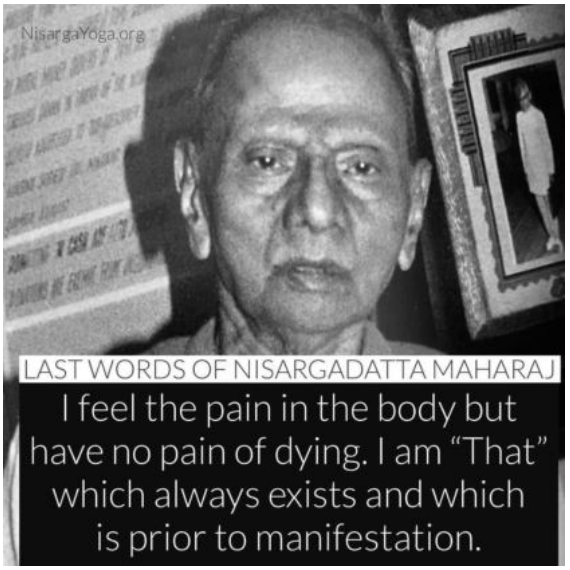

The individual soul is full, but it is suffering due to fear of death. Compassion arises in Sages when they see the unnecessary suffering of their devotees.
• Nisargadatta Maharaj •
NISARGAYOGA.COM


Real meditation is to abide in this sense of being. In fact, meditation means the sense of being holding on to itself.
Nisargadatta Maharaj
NisargaYoga.com


You need not bring your dream to a definite conclusion, or make it noble, or happy, or beautiful; all you need is to realise that you are dreaming.
Nisargadatta Maharaj
NisargaYoga.com

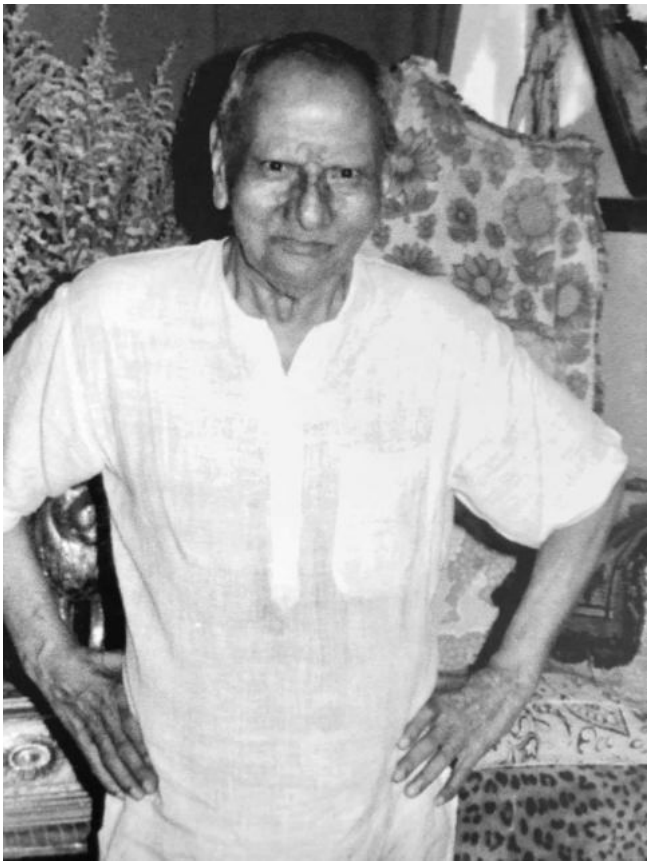
Seen from the earth, the sun rises and sets. But from the standpoint of the sun, it shines continuously and has no knowledge of rising and setting.
Nisargadatta Maharaj
NisargaYoga.com


BY ABIDANCE IN [THE SUPREME ALL-PERVADING PRINCIPLE], BIRTH AND DEATH WILL BE TRANSCENDED. FOR THIS PURPOSE YOU DO NOT HAVE TO PRACTICE ANY RITUALS OR SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES. ONLY BE PRIOR TO MIND, JUST BE.
Nisargadatta Maharaj
NISARGAYOGA.COM


NisargaYoga.org
LAST WORDS OF NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ
I feel the pain in the body but have no pain of dying. I am "That" which always exists and which is prior to manifestation.

Eventually, you will find shelter and peace in no other ashram except your very own.
...ultimate relaxation - final abidance, will be available only in your ashram and nowhere else.
The road is inward into your ashram...
The real, profound meaning of ashram is the firm conviction that I am.

- Nisargadatta Maharaj -



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Untitled: https://fb.watch/b3AJ9BH1CH/

Untitled: https://fb.watch/b3AL9Sjg9T/

Untitled: https://fb.watch/b3ANITt_d6/

Untitled: https://fb.watch/b3AR8MFDqs/

Untitled: https://fb.watch/b3ASO520YW/

Ref: sri-nisargadatta-maharaj.blogspot.com

Art work on Samadhi day: Riddick Arts: https://youtu.be/XKFIkyqhqJI

Rare, unpublished audio talk of Maharaj: https://youtu.be/N-R9Ec3CNjQ
(Translator: Mohan Gaitonde)

Ref: Nisargadatta Maharaj YouTube channel:

Nisargadatta Maharaj audios and talks:

1.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/fkAJH-luIqY

2.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/_zZ7smBHyb8

3.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/0Y1SvV88j64

4.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/Prkx2jiizRk

5.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/PTPvM8T_2Ao

6.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/0QKk9h_-j1I

7.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/FySAyq9YEF8

8.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/19PPVHxfXk0

9.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/RsbPOF1IrAA

10.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/YI4Jb7I300g

11.Nisargadatta Maharaj audio: https://youtu.be/I-JdBss3zpI

12.Moments with Nisargadatta Maharaj (teaser): https://youtu.be/0BwZ0PT2k_Y

13.Awaken to eternal: https://youtu.be/vXohtqQHL6I

14. Nisargadatta Maharaj-discourse: https://youtu.be/B5SkL9qnlNg

15. Nisargadatta Maharaj and Ramana Maharshi: https://youtu.be/2Hw0QpKR3s8
(David Godman)

16. Who am I? : https://youtu.be/VPbqU9DBR3M
(David Godman)

17. Nisargadatta Maharaj: I am only the Self: https://youtu.be/1G7d526eB5A

18. Nisargadatta Maharaj: Awaken to the eternal (full): https://youtu.be/DfR52Rx2X6o

19. Talks with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: https://youtu.be/VPbqtAELM0w

20. I am only the Self: https://youtu.be/Uzd0txiRN2E

21. Nisargadatta audio: https://youtu.be/sbp5Fln6Xc8

22. Nisargadatta audio: https://youtu.be/N-R9Ec3CNjQ

23. Nisargadatta Maharaj: https://youtu.be/BrQVPOoskFE

24. Nisargadatta Maharaj and Bhagavan Nityananda: https://youtu.be/3TXRD_XKmuY

25. Talk with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: https://youtu.be/KlOhjrfuNPg

26. Nirgunache bheti -Marathi: https://youtu.be/0wX0j_JmO2k

27. Sri Nisargadatta 3-satsang: https://youtu.be/Lbg9CTxUSvE

28. Rays of the Absolute: legacy of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: https://youtu.be/ugK51abLMtI

29. Nirgunachebheti - Trailer of Mahadaj's biographical documentary: https://youtu.be/tSr9SehCEFE

30. Nisargadatta Maharaj-Tatwamasi: https://youtu.be/QV1VJVMbcIY

YouTube videos:

I am only the Self: Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: https://youtu.be/Uzd0txiRN2E

Prior to being: Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: https://youtu.be/xK88rB_Yv5A

Awaken to the eternal (full): https://youtu.be/DfR52Rx2X6o

I am That: https://youtu.be/xj1e-Oz1pFs

While in the body, be vast and free: https://youtu.be/xj1e-Oz1pFs

Life after Self-realization: https://youtu.be/M45kao8kEKg

Focus on Pure being: https://youtu.be/hV521XAoask

Maharaj speaks about his Samadhi shrine: https://youtu.be/sXX3X6Xc-6Q

Final talks of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: https://youtu.be/hJsYvacdlck

Nature of time-tied to the body: audio: https://youtu.be/2i38fArcXWI

All individuals are imaginary: https://youtu.be/rDvzDrwXxkA

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj-a meditation: https://youtu.be/1pL0fyusvhA

Consciousness and the Absolute: https://youtu.be/IznBMlmcxRI

Nisargadatta Maharaj-quotes: https://youtu.be/s3BRh6Gm3i4

Rays of the Absolute-Part 2: https://youtu.be/qZXohO5vb3Y

Who am I ?: https://youtu.be/i2qTKAqC3Z4

Nisargadatta Maharaj Pravachan: https://youtu.be/JRE4m77n9e0

I am awareness: https://youtu.be/jQs27TSPa_k

APPENDIX

Remembering Nisargadatta Maharaj : David Godman

Ref: sri-nisargadatta-maharaj.blogspot.com

“I was sitting with a visitor recently, looking at a new book on Nisargadatta Maharaj that consisted of photos and brief quotes. I knew some of the people in the pictures and narrated a few stories about them. This prompted a wider and lengthy discussion on some of the events that went on in Maharaj's presence. After she left I felt prompted to write down some of the things I had remembered since I had never bothered to record any of my memories of Maharaj before. As I went about recording the conversation, a few other memories surfaced, things I hadn't thought about for years. This, therefore, is a record of a pleasant afternoon's talk, supplemented by recollections of related incidents that somehow never came up”. ---- David Godman

Harriet: Every book I have seen about Maharaj, and I think I have looked at most of them, is a record of his teachings. Did no one ever bother to record the things that were going on around him? Ramakrishna had The Gospel of Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi had Day by Day, and a whole library of books by devotees that all talk about life with their Guru. Why hasn't Maharaj spawned a similar genre?
David Godman: Maharaj very rarely spoke about his life, and he didn't encourage questions about it. I think he saw himself as a kind of doctor who diagnosed and treated the perceived spiritual ailments of the people who came to him for advice. His medicine was his presence and his powerful words. Anecdotes from his past were not part of the prescription. Nor did he seem interested in telling stories about anything or anyone else.

Harriet: You said 'rarely spoke'. That means that you must have heard at least a few stories. What did you hear him talk about?
David: Mostly about his Guru, Siddharameshwar Maharaj, and the effect he had had on his life. I think his love for his Guru and his gratitude to him were always present with him. Nisargadatta Maharaj used to do five bhajans a day simply because his Guru had asked him to. Siddharameshwar Maharaj had passed away in 1936, but Nisargadatta Maharaj was still continuing with these practices more than forty years later. I once heard him say, 'My Guru asked me to do these five bhajans daily, and he never cancelled his instructions before he passed away. I don't need to do them any more but I will carry on doing them until the day I die because this is the command of my Guru. I continue to obey his instructions, even though I know these bhajans are pointless, because of the respect and gratitude I feel towards him.'

Harriet: Did he ever talk about the time he was with Siddharameshwar, about what passed between them?
David: Not on any of the visits I made. Ranjit Maharaj once came to visit during one of his morning sessions. They chatted in Marathi for a few minutes and then Ranjit left. Maharaj simply said, 'That man is a jnani. He is a disciple of my Guru, but he is not teaching.' That visit could have been a springboard to any number of stories about his Guru or about Ranjit,

but he wasn't interested in talking about them. He just got on with answering the questions of his visitors.

Harriet: What else did you glean about his background and the spiritual tradition he came from?
David: He was part of a spiritual lineage that is known as the Navnath Sampradaya. This wasn't a secret because he had photos or pictures of many of the teachers from his lineage on his walls. He did a Guru puja every morning at the end of which he put kumkum on the foreheads of all the teachers in his lineage and on the photos of everyone else he thought was enlightened. I should mention that his walls were covered with portraits. Ramana Maharshi was there, and so were many other famous saints who were not part of his lineage. Mixed in with them were other pictures, such as one of Sivaji, a famous Marathi warrior from a few hundred years ago.

I once asked him why Sivaji had made it onto his walls, and he said, 'My son wants me to keep it there. It's the logo on our brand of beedis. He thinks that if it is mixed in with all the other pictures that I do puja to, sales will increase.'

Harriet: What did he say about all these photos of the people from his lineage? Did he never explain who they were?
David: Never. I only found out what their names were a few years later when I came across a book by R. D. Ranade, who was in a Karnataka branch of the sampradaya. He, or rather his organisation, brought out a souvenir that contained the same photos I had seen on Maharaj's walls, along with a brief description of who they were.

I do remember one interesting story that Maharaj told about the sampradaya. He had been answering questions in his usual way when he paused to give us a piece of history:

'I sit here every day answering your questions, but this is not the way that the teachers of my lineage used to do their work. A few hundred years ago there were no questions and answers at all. Ours is a householder lineage, which means everyone had to go out and earn his living. There were no meetings like this where disciples met in large numbers with the Guru and asked him questions. Travel was difficult. There were no buses, trains and planes. In the old days the Guru did the travelling on foot, while the disciples stayed at home and looked after their families. The Guru walked from village to village to meet the disciples. If he met someone he thought was ready to be included in the sampradaya, he would initiate him with the mantra of the lineage. That was the only teaching given out. The disciple would repeat the mantra and periodically the Guru would come to the village to see what progress was being made. When the Guru knew that he was about to pass away, he would appoint one of the householder-devotees to be the new Guru, and that new Guru would then take on the teaching duties: walking from village to village, initiating new devotees and supervising the progress of the old ones.'

I don't know why this story suddenly came out. Maybe he was just tired of answering the same questions again and again.

Harriet: I have heard that Maharaj occasionally gave out a mantra to people who asked. Was this the same mantra?

David: Yes, but he wasn't a very good salesman for it. I once heard him say, 'My Guru has authorised me to give out this mantra to anyone who asks for it, but I don't want you to feel that it is necessary or important. It is more important to find out the source of your beingness.'

Nevertheless, some people would ask. He would take them downstairs and whisper it in his or her ear. It was Sanskrit and quite long, but you only got one chance to remember it. He would not write it down for you. If you didn't remember it from that one whisper, you never got another chance.

Harriet: What other teaching instructions did Siddharameshwar give him? Was he the one who encouraged him to teach by answering questions, rather than in the more traditional way?
David: I have no idea if he was asked to teach in a particular way. Siddharameshwar told him that he could teach and give out the Guru mantra to anyone who asked for it, but he wasn't allowed to appoint a successor. You have to remember that Nisargadatta wasn't realised himself when Siddharameshwar passed away.

Harriet: What about personal details? Did Maharaj ever talk about his childhood or his family? Ramana Maharshi often told stories about his early life, but I don't recollect reading a single biographical incident in any of Maharaj's books.
David: That's true. He just didn't seem interested in talking about his past. The only story I remember him telling was more of a joke than a story. Some man came in who seemed to have known him for many years. He talked to Maharaj in Marathi in a very free and familiar way. No translations were offered but after about ten minutes all the Marathi-knowing people there simultaneously broke out into laughter. After first taking Maharaj's permission, one of the translators explained what it was all about.

'Maharaj says that when he was married, his wife used to give him a very hard time. She was always bossing him around and telling him what to do. "Maharaj do this, Maharaj go to the market and buy that."' She didn't call him Maharaj, of course, but I can't remember what she did call him. The translator continued: 'His wife died a long time ago, when Maharaj was in his forties. It is usual for men of this age who are widowed to marry again, so all Maharaj's relatives wanted him to find another wife. He refused, saying, "The day she died I married freedom".'

I find it hard to imagine anyone bossing Maharaj around, or even trying to. He was a feisty character who stood no nonsense from anyone.

Harriet: From what I have heard 'feisty' may be a bit of a euphemism. I have heard that he could be quite bad-tempered and aggressive at times.
David: Yes, that's true, but I just think that this was part of his teaching method. Some people need to be shaken up a bit, and shouting at them is one way of doing it. I remember one woman asking him, rather innocently, 'I thought enlightened people were supposed to be happy and blissful. You seem to be grumpy most of the time. Doesn't your state give you perpetual happiness and peace?'

He replied, 'The only time a jnani truly rejoices is when someone else becomes a jnani'.

Harriet: How often did that happen?
David: I don't know. That was another area that he didn't seem to want to talk about.

I once asked directly, 'How many people have become realised through your teachings?'

He didn't seem to welcome the question: 'What business is that of yours?' he answered. 'How does knowing that information help you in any way?'

'Well,' I said, 'depending on your answer, it might increase or decrease my level of optimism. If there is a lottery with only one winning ticket out of ten million, then I can't be very optimistic about winning. But if it's a hundred winning tickets out of a thousand, I would feel a lot better about my chances. If you could assure me that people are waking up here, I would feel good about my own chances. And I think feeling good about my chances would be good for my level of earnestness.'

'Earnestness' was one of the key words in his teachings. He thought that it was good to have a strong desire for the Self and to have all one's faculties turned towards it whenever possible. This strong focus on the truth was what he termed earnestness. I can't remember exactly what Maharaj said in reply except that I know he didn't divulge any numbers. He didn't seem to think that it was any of mine or anyone else's business to know such information.

Harriet: Maybe there were so few, it would have been bad for your 'earnestness' to be told.
David: That's a possibility because I don't think there were many.

Harriet: Did you ever find out, directly or indirectly?
David: Not that day. However, I bided my time and waited for an opportunity to raise the question again. One morning Maharaj seemed to be more-than-usually frustrated about our collective inability to grasp what he was talking about.

'Why do I waste my time with you people?' he exclaimed. 'Why does no one ever understand what I am saying?'

I took my chance: 'In all the years that you have been teaching, how many people have truly understood and experienced your teachings?'

He was quiet for a moment, and then he said, 'One. Maurice Frydman.' He didn't elaborate and I didn't follow it up.

I mentioned earlier that at the conclusion of his morning puja he put kumkum on the forehead of all the pictures in his room of the people he knew were enlightened. There were two big pictures of Maurice there, and both of them were daily given the kumkum treatment. Maharaj clearly had a great respect for Maurice. I remember on one of my early visits querying Maharaj about some statement of his that had been recorded in ‘I am That’. I think it was about fulfilling desires.

Maharaj initially didn't seem to agree with the remarks that had been attributed to him in the book, but then he added, 'The words must be true because Maurice wrote them. Maurice was a jnani, and the jnani's words are always the words of truth.'

I have met several people who knew Maurice, and all of them have extraordinary stories to tell about him. He visited Swami Ramdas in the 1930s and Ramdas apparently told him that this would be his final birth. That comment was recorded in Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi in the late 1930s, decades before he had his meetings with Maharaj. He was at various stages of his life a follower of Ramana Maharshi, Gandhi, and J. Krishnamurti. While he was a Gandhian he went to work for the raja of a small principality and somehow persuaded him to abdicate and hand over all his authority to people he had formerly ruled as an absolute monarch. His whole life is full of astonishing incidents such as these that are virtually unknown. I have been told by someone who used to be a senior Indian government official in the 1960s that it was Frydman who persuaded the then India Prime Minister Nehru to allow the Dalai Lama and the other exiled Tibetans to stay in India. Frydman apparently pestered him continuously for months until he finally gave his consent. None of these activities were ever publicly acknowledged because Frydman disliked publicity of any kind and always tried to do his work anonymously.
Harriet: What were Frydman's relations with Ramana Maharshi like? Did he leave a record?
David: There are not many stories in the Ramanasramam books, and in the few incidents that do have Maurice's name attached to them, Ramana is telling him off, usually for trying to give him special treatment. In an article that Maurice wrote very late in his life, he lamented the fact that he didn't fully appreciate and make use of Bhagavan's teachings and presence while he was alive.

However, he did use his extraordinary intellect and editing skills to bring out Maharshi's Gospel in 1939. This is one of the most important collections of dialogues between Bhagavan and his devotees. The second half of the book contains Frydman's questions and Bhagavan's replies to them. The quality of the questioning and the editing is quite extraordinary.

A few hundred years ago a French mathematician set a difficult problem and challenged anyone to solve it. Isaac Newton solved it quickly and elegantly and sent off the solution anonymously. The French mathematician immediately recognized that Newton was the author and apparently said, 'A lion is recognized by his claws'.

I would make the same comments about the second half of Maharshi's Gospel. Though Frydman's name has never appeared on any of the editions of the book, I am absolutely certain that he was the editor and the questioner.

Harriet: So far as you are aware Maharaj never publicly acknowledged anyone else's enlightenment?
David: There may have been others but the only other one I know about, since I witnessed it first-hand, was a Canadian ? At least I think he was Canadian ? called Rudi. I had listened to some tapes before I first went to Maharaj and this man Rudi featured prominently on them. I have to say that he sounded utterly obnoxious. He was pushy, argumentative and aggressive; apparently Maharaj threw him out on several occasions. I had never met Rudi; I only knew him from the tapes I had heard.

Then one day Maharaj announced, 'We have a jnani coming to visit us this morning. His name is Rudi.' I laughed because I assumed that Maharaj was making fun of his pretensions to enlightenment. Maharaj could be quite scathing about people who claimed to be enlightened, but who weren't. Wolter Keers, a Dutch advaita teacher, was someone who fell into that category. Every so often he would come to Bombay to see Maharaj, and on every visit Maharaj would tell him off for claiming to be enlightened when he wasn't. On one visit he started lecturing Wolter before he had even properly entered the room. There was a wooden stairway that led directly into the room where Maharaj taught. As Wolter's head appeared above the top step, Maharaj suspended his other business and started laying into him.

'You are not enlightened! How dare you teach in the West, claiming that you are enlightened?'

On one of my other visits Wolter was due to arrive and Maharaj kept asking when he was going to appear.

'Where is he? I want to shout at him again. When is he going to arrive?'

On that particular visit I had to leave before Wolter came so I don't know what form the lecture took, but I suspect that it was a typically hot one. Anyway, let's get back to Rudi. When Maharaj announced that a 'jnani' was due, I assumed that Rudi was going to get the Wolter treatment. However, much to my amazement, Maharaj treated him as the genuine article when he finally showed up.

After spending a good portion of the morning wondering when Rudi was going to appear, Maharaj then asked him why he had bothered to come at all.

'To pay my respects to you and to thank you for what you have done for me. I am leaving for Canada and I came to say goodbye.'

Maharaj didn't accept this explanation: 'If you have come to this room, you must have some doubt left in you. If you were doubt-free, you wouldn't bother to come at all. I never visit any other teachers or Gurus because I no longer have any doubts about who I am. I don't need to go anywhere. Many people come to me and say, "You must visit this or that teacher. They are wonderful," but I never go because there is nothing I need from anyone. You must want something you haven't got or have a doubt to come here. Why have you come?'

Rudi repeated his original story and then kept quiet. I was looking at him and he seemed to me to be a man who was in some inner state of ecstasy or bliss that was so compelling, he found it hard even to speak. I still wasn't sure whether Maharaj was accepting his credentials, but then the woman he had arrived with asked Maharaj a question.

Maharaj replied, 'Ask your friend later. He is a jnani. He will give you correct answers. Keep quiet this morning. I want to talk to him.'

It was at this point that I realised that Maharaj really did accept that this man had realised the Self. Rudi then asked Maharaj for advice on what he should do when he returned to Canada.

I thought that it was a perfectly appropriate question for a disciple to ask a Guru on such an occasion, but Maharaj seemed to take great exception to it.

'How can you ask a question like that if you are in the state of the Self? Don't you know that you don't have any choice about what you do or don't do?'

Rudi kept quiet. I got the feeling that Maharaj was trying to provoke him into a quarrel or an argument, and that Rudi was refusing to take the bait.

At some point Maharaj asked him, 'Have you witnessed your own death?' and Rudi replied 'No'.

Maharaj then launched into a mini-lecture on how it was necessary to witness one's own death in order for there to be full realisation of the Self. He said that it had happened to him after he thought that he had fully realised the Self, and it wasn't until after this death experience that he understood that this process was necessary for final liberation. I hope somebody recorded this dialogue on tape because I am depending on a twenty-five-year-old memory for this. It seems to be a crucial part of Maharaj's experience and teachings but I never heard him mention it on any other occasion. I have also not come across it in any of his books.

Maharaj continued to pester Rudi about the necessity of witnessing death, but Rudi kept quiet and just smiled beatifically. He refused to defend himself, and he refused to be provoked. Anyway, I don't think he was in any condition to start and sustain an argument. Whatever state he was in seemed to be compelling all his attention. I got the feeling that he found articulating even brief replies hard work.

Finally, Rudi addressed the question and said, 'Why are you getting so excited about something that doesn't exist?' I assumed he meant that death was unreal, and as such, was not worth quarrelling about.

Maharaj laughed, accepted the answer and gave up trying to harass him.

'Have you ever had a teacher like me?' demanded Maharaj, with a grin.
'No,' replied Rudi, 'and have you ever had a disciple like me?'

They both laughed and the dialogue came to an end. I have no idea what happened to Rudi. He left and I never heard anything more about him. As they say at the end of fairy stories, he probably lived happily ever after.

Harriet: You say that Maharaj never visited other teachers because he no longer had any doubts. Did he ever talk about other teachers and say what he thought of them?
David: He seemed to like J. Krishnamurti. He had apparently seen him walking on the streets of Bombay many years before. I don't think that Krishnamurti noticed him. Afterwards, Maharaj always spoke well of Krishnamurti and he even encouraged people to go and see him. One day Maharaj took a holiday and told everyone to go and listen to Krishnamurti instead. That, I think, shows a high level of approval.

The most infamous teacher of the late 1970s was Osho, or Rajneesh as he was in those days. I once heard Maharaj say that he respected the state that Rajneesh was in, but he couldn't understand all the instructions he was giving to all the thousands of foreigners who were then coming to India to see him. Although the subject only came up a couple of times while I was there, I got the feeling he liked the teacher but not the teachings. When Rajneesh's foreign 'sannyasins' showed up in their robes, he generally gave them a really hard time. I watched him throw quite a few of them out, and I saw him shout at some of them before they had even managed to get into his room.

I heard a story that he also encountered U. G. Krishnamurti in Bombay. I will tell you the version I heard and you can make up your own mind about it. It was told to me by someone who spent a lot of time with U. G. in the 1970s.

It seems that Maurice Frydman knew U. G. and also knew that he and Maharaj had never met, and probably didn't know about each other. He wanted to test the theory that one jnani can spot another jnani by putting them both in the same room, with a few other people around as camouflage. He organised a function and invited both of them to attend. U. G. spent quite some time there, but Maharaj only came for a few minutes and then left.

After Maharaj had left Maurice went up to U. G. and said, 'Did you see that old man who came in for a few minutes. Did you notice anything special? What did you see?'

U. G. replied, 'I saw a man, Maurice, but the important thing is, what did you see?'

The next day Maurice went to see Maharaj and asked, 'Did you see that man I invited yesterday?' A brief description of what he looked like and where he was standing followed.

Then Maurice asked, 'What did you see?'

Maharaj replied, 'I saw a man Maurice, but the important thing is, what did you see?'

It's an amusing story and I pass it on as I heard it, but I should say that U. G.'s accounts of his meetings with famous teachers sometimes don't ring true to me. I have heard and read his accounts of his meetings with both Ramana Maharshi and Papaji, and in both accounts Bhagavan and Papaji are made to do and say things that to me are completely out of character.

When Maharaj told Rudi that he had no interest in visiting other teachers, it was a very true statement. He refused all invitations to go and check out other Gurus. Mullarpattan, one of the translators, was a bit of a Guru-hopper in the 1970s, and he was always bringing reports of new teachers to Maharaj, but he could never persuade him to go and look at them. So, reports of meetings between Maharaj and other teachers are not common. Papaji ended up visiting Maharaj and had a very good meeting with him. In his biography he gives the impression that he only went there once, but I heard from people in Bombay that Papaji would often take his devotees there. He visited quite a few teachers in the 1970s, often when he was accompanying foreigners who had come to India for the first time. It was his version of showing them the sights. They would never ask questions; they would just sit quietly and watch what was going on.

Harriet: What was Maharaj's attitude to Ramana Maharshi and his teachings? Did you ever discuss Bhagavan's teachings with him?
David: He had enormous respect for both his attainment and his teachings. He once told me that one of the few regrets of his life was that he never met him in person. He did come to the ashram in the early 1960s with a group of his Marathi devotees. They were all on a South Indian pilgrimage tour and Ramanasramam was one of the places he visited. With regard to the teachings he once told me, 'I agree with everything that Ramana Maharshi said, with the exception of this business of the heart-centre being on the right side of the chest. I have never had that experience myself.' I discussed various aspects of Bhagavan's teachings with him and always found his answers to be very illuminating. He asked me once, 'Have you understood Ramana Maharshi's teachings?' Since I knew he meant 'Had I actually experienced the truth of them?', I replied, 'The more I listen to Maharaj, the more I understand what Bhagavan is trying to tell me'.

I felt that this was true at both the theoretical and experiential levels. His explanations broadened and deepened my intellectual understanding of Bhagavan's teachings and his presence also gave me experiential glimpses of the truth that they were all pointing towards.

I have to mention Ganesan's visit here. V. Ganesan is the grandnephew of Ramana Maharshi and in the 1970s he was the de facto manager of Ramanasramam. Nowadays, his elder brother Sundaram is in charge. Ganesan came to visit Maharaj for the first time in the late 1970s. As soon as he arrived Maharaj stood up and began to collect cushions. He made a big pile of them and made Ganesan sit on top of the heap. Then, much to everyone's amazement, Maharaj cleared a space on the floor and did a full-length prostration to him. When he stood up, he told Ganesan, 'I never had a chance to prostrate to your great-uncle Ramana Maharshi, so I am prostrating to you instead. This is my prostration to him.'

Harriet: That's an extraordinary story! Were you there that day?
David: Yes, I was sitting just a few feet away. But the truly extraordinary thing for me was what happened next. Maharaj and Ganesan chatted for a while, about what I can't remember. Then Maharaj made an astonishing offer: 'If you stay here with me for two weeks, I guarantee you will leave in the same state as your great-uncle Ramana Maharshi.'

Ganesan left that day and didn't come back. I couldn't believe he had turned down an offer like that. If someone of the stature of Maharaj had made an offer like that to me, I would have immediately nailed myself to the floor. Nothing would have induced me to go away before the time was up. When I returned to Ramanasramam I asked Ganesan why he hadn't stayed. 'I didn't think he was serious,' he replied. 'I just thought he was joking.'

It was during this visit that Maharaj asked Ganesan to start giving talks in Ramanasramam. 'I have been to Ramanasramam,' he said, 'and you have wonderful facilities there. Many pilgrims come, but no one is giving them any teachings. It is a sacred and holy place but people are leaving it and coming here because no one is teaching there. Why should they have to travel a thousand miles to sit in this crowded room when you have such a great place? You need to start giving talks there. You need to start explaining what Ramana Maharshi's teachings are.'

Ganesan was unwilling to follow that advice either, or at least not at the time. There is a strong tradition that no one is allowed to teach in Ramanasramam. Ramana Maharshi is still the teacher there and no one is allowed to replace him. It is not just a question of having a new Guru there; the ashram management does not even encourage anyone to publicly explain what Ramana Maharshi's teachings mean. Ganesan didn't want to rock the boat and incur the ire of his family and the devotees who might object, so he kept quiet. It is only in the last few years that he has started teaching, but he is doing it in his own house, rather than in the ashram itself. The ashram is still very much a teacher-free zone.

I talked to Ganesan recently about Maharaj and he told me a nice story about a Frenchwoman whom he took there.

'When I started to visit Maharaj some of Bhagavan's devotees criticised me for abandoning Bhagavan and going to another Guru. Many of them seemed to think that going to see Maharaj indicated that I didn't have sufficient faith in Bhagavan and his teachings. I didn't see it that way. I have visited many great saints, and I never felt that I was abandoning Bhagavan or being disrespectful to him by going on these trips. A Frenchwoman, Edith Deri, was one of the women who complained in this way. We were in Bombay together and I somehow convinced her to accompany me on a visit to Maharaj. She came very reluctantly and seemed determined not to enjoy the visit.

'When we arrived Maharaj asked her if she had any questions. She said that she hadn't.

'"So why have you come to see me?" he asked.

'"I have nothing to say," she replied. "I don't want to talk while I am here."

'"But you must say something," said Maharaj. "Talk about anything you want to. Just say something."

'"If I say something, you will then give some reply, and everyone will then applaud because you have given such a wonderful answer. I don't want to give you the opportunity to show off."

'It was a very rude answer, but Maharaj didn't show any sign of annoyance.

'Instead, he replied, "Water doesn't care whether it is quenching thirst or not".

'And then he repeated the sentence, very slowly and with emphasis. He often repeated himself like this when he had something important to say.

'Edith told me later that this one sentence completely destroyed her scepticism and her negativity. The words stopped her mind, blew away her determination to be a spoilsport, and put her into a state of peace and silence that lasted for long after her visit.'

Harriet: I have read on many occasions that Ramana Maharshi preferred to teach in silence. I never get that impression with Nisargadatta Maharaj. Did people ever get a chance to sit in silence with him?

David: During the years that I visited it was possible to meditate in his room in the early morning. I forget the exact timings, but I think that it was for an hour and a half. Maharaj would be there, but he would be going about his normal morning activities. He would potter around doing odd jobs; he would appear with just a towel around his waist if he was about to have a bath; sometimes he would sit and read a newspaper. I never got the feeling that he was making a conscious effort to teach in silence in the way that Ramana Maharshi did by looking at people and transmitting some form of grace. However, he did seem to be aware of the mental states of all the people who were sitting there, and he not infrequently complained about them.

'I know who is meditating here and who is not,' he suddenly announced one morning, 'and I know who is making contact with his beingness. Only one person is doing that at the moment. The rest of you are all wasting your time.' Then he carried on with whatever he was doing. It was true that many people didn't go there to meditate. They just saw it as an opportunity to be with him in his house. They might be sitting cross-legged on his floor, but most of the time they would be peeping to see what he was doing instead of meditating. One morning he got tired of being spied on this way and exploded: 'Why are you people cluttering up my floor like this? You are not meditating; you are just getting in the way! If you want to go and sit somewhere, go and sit on the toilet for an hour! At least you will be doing something useful there.'

Harriet: What about the other times of the day, when he was available for questioning? Did he ever sit in silence during those periods?
David: There were two periods when it was possible to question him: one in the late morning and one in the evening. Translators would be available at both sessions. He encouraged people to talk during these sessions, or at least he did when I first started going to see him. Later on, he would use these sessions to give long talks on the nature of consciousness. He never sat quietly if no one had anything to say. He would actively solicit questions, but if no one wanted to talk to him, he would start talking himself.

I only ever had one opportunity to sit with him in complete silence and that was at the beginning of the summer monsoon. When the monsoon breaks in Bombay, usually around the end of the first week of June, there are very heavy rains that bring the city to a standstill. The storm drains are generally clogged, and for a day or so people are walking round in knee-deep water. And not just water. The sewers overflow and the animals that live in them drown. Anyone brave enough to go for a paddle would be wading through sewage, waterlogged garbage and the corpses of whatever animals had recently drowned. Public transport comes to a halt since in many places the water level is too high to drive through.

One afternoon two of us waded through the floodwaters to Maharaj's door. We were both staying in a cheap lodge about 200 yards away, so it wasn't that much of a trek. We scrubbed off the filth with water from a tap on the ground floor and made our way up to Maharaj's room. He seemed very surprised to see us. I think he thought that the floods would keep everyone away. He said in Marathi that there would be no session that afternoon because none of the translators would be able to make it. I assume he wanted us to leave and go home, but we both pretended that we didn't understand what he was trying to tell us. After one or two more unsuccessful attempts to persuade us to go, he gave up and sat in a corner of the room with a newspaper in front of his face so that we couldn't even look at him.

I didn't care. I was just happy to be sitting in the same room as him. I sat there in absolute silence with him for over an hour and it was one of the most wonderful experiences I ever had with him. I felt an intense rock-solid silence descend on me that became deeper and deeper as the minutes passed. There was just a glow of awareness that filled me so completely, thoughts were utterly impossible. You don't realise what a monstrous imposition the mind is until you have lived without it, completely happily, completely silently, and completely effortlessly for a short period of time. For most of this time I was looking in the direction of Maharaj. Sometimes he would turn a page and glance in our direction, and when he did he still seemed to be irritated that we hadn't left. I was smiling inwardly at his annoyance because it wasn't touching me in any way. I had no self-consciousness, no embarrassment, no feeling of being an imposition. I was just resting contentedly in my own being.

After just over an hour of this he got up and shooed us both out. I prostrated and left. Later on, I wondered why he didn't sit in silence more often since there was clearly a very powerful quietening energy coming off him when he was silent. Ramana Maharshi said that speaking actually interrupted the flow of the silent energy he was giving out. I have often wondered if the same thing happened with Maharaj.

Harriet: And what was your conclusion?
David: I realised that it was not his nature to keep quiet. His teaching method was geared to arguing and talking. That's what he felt most comfortable doing.

Harriet: Can you elaborate on that a little more?
David: I should qualify what I am about to say by stating that most of it is just my own opinion, based on observing him deal with the people who came to him. It doesn't come from anything I heard him say himself. When people first came to see him, he would encourage them to talk about their background. He would try to find out what spiritual path you were on, and what had brought you to him. In the face of Maharaj's probing questions visitors would end up having to justify their world-view and their spiritual practices. This would be one level of the interaction. At a deeper and more subtle level Maharaj would be radiating an energy, a sakti, that quietened your mind and made you aware of what lay underneath the mind and all its ideas and concepts. Now imagine these two processes going on simultaneously. With his mind the questioner has just constructed and articulated a version of his world-view. Underneath, though, he will be feeling the pull of his beingness, the knowledge of what is truly real, as opposed to the ideas that he merely thinks to be real. Maharaj's energy will be enhancing awareness of that substratum all the time. At some point the questioner will become acutely aware of what seem to be two competing realities: the conceptual structure he has just outlined, and the actual experience that underlies it. There was a certain look that appeared on some people's faces when this happened: a kind of indecisive 'which way should I go?' look. Sometimes the questioner would realise immediately that all his ideas and beliefs were just concepts. He would drop them and rest in the beingness instead. This, for me, was the essence of Maharaj's teaching technique. He wouldn't try to convince you by argument. He would instead make you argue yourself into a position that you felt to be true, and then he would undercut that position by giving you a taste of the substratum that underlay all concepts. If you were ready for it, you would drop your attachment to your concepts and rest in what lay underneath them. If not, you would blunder ahead, going deeper and deeper into the minefield of the mind. Some people got it quickly. Others, who

were desperate for a structure to cling to, would come back again and again with questions that were designed merely to refine their understanding of his teachings.

Talking to visitors and arguing with them was an essential part of this technique. For it to work effectively Maharaj required that visitors talk about themselves and their world-view because he needed them to see that all these ideas were just concepts having no ultimate reality. He needed people to look at their concepts, understand their uselessness and then reject them in favour of direct experience.

I should mention here the limitations he put on the types of questions that he was willing to answer. He would sometimes tell new people, 'I am not interested in what you have heard or read. I am not interested in second-hand information that you have acquired from somewhere else. I am only interested in your own experience of yourself. If you have any questions about that, you can ask me.' Later, after you had had your initial dialogues with him, he would introduce an even more stringent test for questions: 'I am not interested in answering questions that assume the existence of an individual person who inhabits a body. I don't accept the existence of such an entity, so for me such questions are entirely hypothetical.'

This second constraint was a real conversation killer. You couldn't say, 'How do I get enlightened?' or 'What do I do?' because all such questions presuppose the existence of an 'I', an assumption that Maharaj always used to reject. I still have vivid memories of him listening as translators explained in Marathi what some questioner had said. As he understood the gist of what the question was Maharaj's face would sometimes turn to a scowl. He would clench his fist, bang it on the floor and shout 'Kalpana! Kalpana!' which means 'Concept! Concept!' That would sometimes be the only answer the questioners would get. Maharaj was definitely not interested in massaging visitor's concepts. He wanted people to drop them, not discuss them.

When this second restriction effectively cut off most of the questions that people like to ask Gurus, Maharaj would fill the vacuum by giving talks about the nature of consciousness. Day after day he would continue with the same topic, often using the same analogies. He would explain how it arises, how it manifests and how it subsides. In retrospect I think he was doing what the ancient rishis of India did when they told their disciples 'You are Brahman'. When a jnani who is established in Brahman as Brahman says to a disciple, 'You are Brahman,' he is not merely conveying a piece of information. There is a power and an authority in the words that, in certain cases, makes the listener become and experience Brahman as he hears the words. This is a power and an authority that only jnanis have. Other people can say 'You are consciousness,' 'You are Brahman,' endlessly, but these will just be pieces of information that you can store in your mind. When a jnani tells you this, the full authority of his state and the full force that lies behind it are conveyed in the statement. If you take delivery of that information in the heart, in consciousness, then you experience that state for yourself. If you take delivery in your mind, you just store it there as an interesting piece of information.

When Maharaj told you endlessly 'You are consciousness,' if you received that information in utter inner silence, it activated an awareness of consciousness to such an extent that you felt, 'He isn't just telling me something; he is actually describing what I am, right now in this moment'.

Harriet: Did this ever happen to you?
David: Yes, and I think that this is what he was referring to when he talked about 'getting the knowledge'. It wasn't an intellectual knowledge he was talking about, and it wasn't Self-realisation either. It was a state in which concepts temporarily dissolved leaving a simple awareness of the being that underlay them. While they lasted the states were very useful; they gave you the conviction and the direct experience that there was something real and enduring that exists whether the mind is there or not.

Harriet: All this is very interesting, but as you have said, a lot of it is your own personal conjecture. Did Maharaj ever confirm himself that this is what he was doing, or trying to do, with the people who came to him?
David: Not directly. He never explained or analysed his teaching methods, or not while I was there. Most of what I have just said comes from my own experience and my own interpretation of what I saw going on there. Other people may have other theories to explain what was going on. However, the facts of the matter are indisputable. People came to Maharaj, had talks or arguments with him, and at some point dropped their accumulation of ideas because they had been convinced that a direct experience invalidated all the long-held cherished notions they had accumulated.

Let me tell you about one conversation I had because it gives some good circumstantial evidence for what I have just been trying to explain. Firstly, I should mention that I sometimes used to argue with Maharaj simply because I knew that he liked people to argue with him. He seemed to like the cut and thrust of debate, and if no one had anything to say or ask, I would pick up the ball and start a discussion with him.

I can't remember any more exactly what we talked about on this particular day, but I do remember that we spoke for about five minutes, during which time I was ostensibly pointing out what I claimed were contradictions in his teachings. He, meanwhile, was doing his best to convince me that no contradictions were involved. It was all very good-humoured and I think he knew that I was only disputing with him because, firstly, we both liked talking and arguing about spiritual topics and, secondly, no one else had any urgent questions to ask. After about five minutes, though, he decided to bring the discussion to a close.

'I don't think you really understand the purpose of my dialogues here. I don't say things simply to convince people that they are true. I am not speaking about these matters so that people can build up a philosophy that can be rationally defended, and which is free of all contradictions. When I speak my words, I am not speaking to your mind at all. I am directing my words directly at consciousness. I am planting my words in your consciousness. If you disturb the planting process by arguing about the meaning of the words, they won't take root there. Once my words have been planted in consciousness, they will sprout, they will grow, and at the appropriate moment they will bear fruit. It's nothing to do with you. All this will happen by itself. However, if you think about the words too much or dispute their meaning, you will postpone the moment of their fruition.' All this was said in a very genial tone. However, at this point, he got very, very serious. Glowering at me he said very sternly, 'Enough talking. Be quiet and let the words do their work!'

I always recollect this exchange with happiness and optimism. I feel I have been graced by his presence and further graced by the words of truth he has planted within me. I think those words will always be with me and I know that at the appropriate moment they will bloom.
Harriet: Have you obeyed his instructions? Have you stopped thinking about the teachings?
David: Until you showed up today I hadn't really thought about the teachings for years. I haven't even read many of the new books of dialogues that have come out about him. That answer I gave a few minutes ago, 'The more I listen to Maharaj, the more I understand what Bhagavan is trying to tell me,' is in one of the books but I didn't find out until a few years ago.

My former wife Vasanta was reading the book and she said, 'There is someone here from Ramanasramam. Do you know who it is?' She read a few lines and I realised that it was me. I used to read I am That cover to cover about once a year, but I don't even do that any more. Sometimes, if I am in the Ramanasramam library, I pick up I am That and read the opening sequence of chapter twenty-three. It is a beautiful description of the jnani's state that I never tire of reading. Other than that, I rarely read or think about the teachings any more.

Having said that, I think it would be correct to say that I have more than enough other concepts in my head which are all acting as a herbicide on the words of truth that Maharaj planted within me. However, I have great faith in the irresistible power of Maharaj's words. Sooner or later they will bear fruit.

Harriet: Ramesh Balsekar used to say, 'The only effective effort is the immediate apperception of reality'. Some people would take that to mean that if you don't get the direct experience as the Guru, in this case Maharaj, is talking to you, you are not going to get it at all. Are you sure you are not just suffering from a case of wishful thinking?
David: There is something in what you say. If you could keep your intellect out of the way when Maharaj was speaking, his words, and the authority behind them, would do their work. When he spoke he wasn't asking you to join in the process at all. How could he be asking you to do anything when he knew that you didn't exist? He wasn't asking you to understand, and he wasn't saying, 'Do this and you will be enlightened'. He wasn't addressing you at all. He was directing his words at the consciousness within you in an attempt to make you aware of who you really were. However, if his words didn't immediately produce results, he knew that they might deliver the goods later on. Remember what happened in his own case. Siddharameshwar told him that he was Brahman. Nisargadatta struggled with this for three years until he finally dropped his doubts and realised it to be the truth.

There is a power in a jnani's words and that power does not dissipate two seconds after the jnani has uttered them. It lingers and it carries on being effective; it carries on doing its work.

Harriet: Did Maharaj himself corroborate this?
David: Yes. I can't remember how the subject came up, but I heard him say, 'The words of enlightened beings have a power that makes them endure. The great saints of the past gave out their teachings, and those teachings have survived because there is an inherent power and authority in them. Other people may have been saying the same thing at the same time, but the words of those people have disappeared because there was no power in them. The words of jnanis have endured because they have the power and authority of the Self behind them.' I mentioned this answer to Papaji when I was interviewing him a few years ago. He gave it his whole-hearted endorsement.

Harriet: When you say that the words 'have endured' does that mean that they have simply endured in books, as remembered quotations, or do they still have the power to awaken people, even centuries after they were spoken? Is not the immediate presence of the Guru necessary for that?
David: I think I would have to say that a living human Guru is necessary for all but the most mature to realise the Self. However, once you have seen a real Guru and been with him, his presence is always with you. You can tune into his presence, his grace, and his power in any number of ways: through his photo, through thinking about him, and through reading his words.

Harriet: Again, I feel compelled to ask, 'Is this your own opinion or do you have some support from Maharaj to back it up?
David: I remember a conversation I had with Maharaj on my first visit. I can't remember how we got round to the subject, but we ended up talking about the power of the Guru and the various channels it manifested through. I had been deeply impressed and deeply moved by I am That, and I told him so.

Me: For several months I have been reading I am That. Through those words I felt a very strong connection with you and the teachings. Can one have a connection with a Guru simply by reading his words, or is it necessary to come in person to see him?

Maharaj: The words will do their work wherever you hear or read them. You can come here and listen to them in person, or you can read them in a book. If the teacher is enlightened, there will be a power in them.

Me: In my particular case I read the words of a Guru who was still alive, and those words compelled me to come here and see you. Perhaps your words had such a strong effect because you are still alive and teaching. I made contact with a living teacher, a living presence. What about a hypothetical case of someone picking up I am That in fifty years' time, and in a country several thousand miles away. That person will never have a chance to see you. Will those words still have the power to transform and awaken?

Maharaj: Time and space exist in your mind, not in the Self. There is no limit to the power of the Self. The power of the Self is always present, always working, always the same. What varies is the readiness and willingness of people to turn their attention to it. If someone picks up this book ten thousand miles away in a thousand years' time, those words will do their work if the reader is in the right state to listen to and assimilate the words.

He didn't actually say that one could get enlightened by reading the words of a dead Guru, but he was quite clear that the words of an enlightened being, even in book form, were charged with a power that future generations could tune into. I think I asked this particular question because of my relationship with Ramana Maharshi. I was the 'hypothetical' person in the question who had discovered the words of a great but deceased Guru. I suppose I really wanted to know whether Ramana Maharshi could be the Guru for someone like me who had been born years after he passed away. Maharaj didn't really answer that question for me, but he did convince me that a considerable part of the power and the authority of Guru could be found in his recorded teachings. Over time, I came to the conclusion that a

living human Guru really is necessary for the vast majority of people, but at the same time I have a great respect for the power that resides in the recorded words of such people.

Harriet: Was this particular dialogue recorded? I think it would be quite an important one for the many people such as myself who have only discovered Maharaj in the years since he passed away.
David: I doubt it. It was a very quiet afternoon session, and only a few of us were there. There were never any organised recordings. People who had a tape recorder would bring it along and make a recording from wherever they were sitting in the room. In the last couple of years several people were doing this, but when I first went, hardly anyone was doing it.

Harriet: You spoke about 'readiness' and 'willingness to listen' as being key factors. Did Maharaj ever speak about how or why some people got the direct experience, while most people didn't?
David: I did talk to him once about this. It was on one of my later visits. I had gone there with a friend of mine, Cary McGraw, and I discovered that it was Cary's birthday that day. When he told me, we were sitting in a cafe in Grant Road in the interval between the end of the bhajans and the start of the morning question-and-answer session. While Maharaj's room was being swept and cleaned, we all had to disappear for half an hour or so. Most of us would go for a tea or coffee break on Grant Road.

I asked Cary what he would like for a birthday present and he replied, 'Go back in there and have a good argument with Maharaj. I used to love to listen to you when you used to harass him about his teachings, but nowadays you hardly open your mouth at all. Go back in there and get him fired up about something. That will be my birthday treat.' I didn't feel much like asking anything, and I definitely didn't feel like embarking on a full-blown debate. I think by that time Maharaj had finally subdued my argumentative tendencies; I was quite content just to sit at the back and listen to what everyone else had to say. We went back in, but I had no idea what to talk about. When everyone had settled down, Cary gave me a nudge and I suddenly found myself talking about why some people get enlightened and others not.

'Ramana Maharshi,' I said, 'got enlightened in a few minutes. It took you three years from the moment you met you Guru until you realised the Self. Other people try for fifty years and don't succeed. Why is it like this? Are the people who try all their lives and fail doing something wrong?'

Most other Hindu teachers would answer a question like this by saying that some people had more or less finished their work in previous lives and were therefore able to realise the Self very quickly in this life. This wasn't an option for Maharaj because he steadfastly refused to accept that reincarnation took place at all. This itself was a little strange to me because in the period that I used to visit him the dust jacket of 'I am That' reproduced a dialogue with him in which he explained in quite some detail how reincarnation took place. However, in the era that I visited him I never once heard him accept the validity of reincarnation, and he frequently said it didn't happen. My question was really, 'If one discounts the theory of reincarnation, which you seem to do, how can someone like Ramana Maharshi get enlightened with no desire for it, no effort and no practice, while everyone else struggles unsuccessfully for decades and fails?'

'It's the chemical,' announced Maharaj. 'Some people are born with a pure chemical and some are not. Those with a pure chemical get enlightened, and those with an impure chemical don't.'

'The chemical' was one of Maharaj's idiosyncratic analogies or metaphors. I think it was derived from the chemical on a roll of film. We are all issued with a 'chemical' at the moment of conception, said Maharaj, and that is our destiny for this life. In one sense it is like a roll of film, a script that has been given to us for this life. Traditional Hinduism teaches that we have prarabdha karma, an unchangeable destiny for this life that is an inevitable result of actions that have been performed in previous lives. Maharaj couldn't incorporate past-life activities into his 'chemical' theory, but he did have an alternative selection of factors to offer.

I can't remember whether it was during this particular conversation or on some other day, but I remember asking him about the components of 'the chemical'. He replied that it was a combination of a wide variety of factors: parents' genes, astrological configurations at the time of conception, the future environment that one was going to be brought up in ? These were just a few that he mentioned. These all coalesced at a particular moment and issued a body, or rather an embryo, with its appointed destiny.

'This is all very deterministic,' I said. 'If the purity of the chemical determines whether or not we get enlightened, why should we even care about it or not? What is the point of trying or not trying, wanting or not wanting, if the purity of the chemical has already decided the matter for us in advance? We may as well all go home.'

Maharaj replied, 'No, it is not completely determined in advance. The vast majority of people in the world are born with a dirty chemical. Nothing they do or don't do will make any difference. Enlightenment is not for them, and most of them won't even care about such matters. At the other end of the spectrum there will be an extremely small number of very pure beings who will become aware of their true nature without any striving or inclination.'

He didn't say so, but I assume he would have put Ramana Maharshi in this category.

'Between these two extremes,' continued Maharaj, 'there are a small number of people whose chemical is only slightly impure. These people have a chance to get enlightened. If they can meet with a Guru who can show them the truth and if their earnestness and seriousness are high enough, they can purify their slightly dirty chemical and find out who they really are. That is why we are all here today. People who come to a teacher with a strong thirst for freedom are the ones who have only a few impurities. They are the ones for whom liberation is possible.'

Harriet: So did he think that the people who came to him were 'advanced'? There must have been a mixture of all kinds of people. They couldn't all have been candidates for liberation.
David: Yes, there was a very eclectic mix of people there, from curiosity seekers to people who had travelled halfway round the world because they were desperate for liberation and thought that Maharaj could help them. I sometimes used to sit next to a homoeopathic doctor who lived a few streets away. He had no interest in liberation and just saw Maharaj as a good source of entertainment.

'This is the best show in the neighbourhood,' he told me once. 'I just come here because I like watching how Maharaj deals with all the people who come. I don't believe a word he says, but he puts on a good show.'

Maharaj to some extent determined the sort of people who were likely to come and stay by setting the agenda on what he was willing to talk about and what he wasn't. He wasn't interested in what he called 'kindergarten lessons'. That meant he generally refused to talk about many of the tenets of traditional Hinduism: ritual worship, karma and reincarnation, common practices such as japa, things like that. A large proportion of the foreigners who were there had come because they had read I am That. They wanted to talk about liberation, not traditional Hindu practices and traditions, and Maharaj was happy to oblige them. The people who wanted to talk about other things soon left to find somewhere more suitable for their inclinations and interests. Some, though, came with traditional ideas and beliefs and fell under the spell of Maharaj and his radical teachings, but I think these people were in the minority.

I remember Mullarpattan telling us one day, 'I was a traditional Ram bhakta when I first arrived here. I thought that if I could have a vision of Ram, I would be sure to join him in Vaikunta [Ram's heavenly realm] when I died. The first day I came, Maharaj told me that Vaikunta didn't exist. I was very shocked to hear a Guru speak like this, but I felt attracted to him and I stayed on. Within a short period of time I dropped all my ideas about the gods and their heavens.'

Some of the other local people were very much interested in Maharaj's uncompromising teachings on liberation, but during the time that I was there, the foreigners generally outnumbered the locals by about three to one in the morning question-and-answer session. This could have been because many of the Bombay devotees had to go out to work, but even on weekends and holidays, the foreigners always outnumbered the Indians. There was a separate session in the evening that was conducted in Marathi. We were never invited to that because there wasn't enough room for everyone, so I have no idea what went on in those sessions.

Harriet: Did you get the feeling that the foreigners were treated a little differently from the local people?
David: I would just say that we had different attitudes, different backgrounds and, for the most part, different aspirations. When we spoke to Maharaj, his answers reflected these differences.

One morning a new Indian couple arrived and asked Maharaj in English a series of questions about how to live a detached spiritual life while they were in the middle of all their family and work responsibilities. This is a standard question in India and everyone in the guru business must have a standard answer to it. Maharaj dealt with them very politely and respectfully and talked to them for about fifteen minutes. At the end of that period he asked them to leave. This was a little bit unusual. Usually, when a questioner had finished talking to Maharaj he would go back to his seat and listen to what everyone else had to say. On this occasion Maharaj watched them disappear down his staircase. He waited about ten seconds more before bursting into delighted laughter.

Slapping his thigh, he said, 'That is the sort of boring conversation I used to have every day before all you foreigners came along!' I think he enjoyed talking to people who didn't come along to talk about all their family or work problems.

Harriet: From what you are saying, I get the feeling that Maharaj had a great respect for the foreigners who came because they came looking for the truth about themselves, not for some palliative, a practice or belief that would keep them happy for a while.
David: In one sense, yes. I did hear him say a couple of times that he respected the fact that we had all abandoned our lives in the West in order to come to India in search of liberation, but that didn't mean that in practice he treated us respectfully. We all got shouted at on various occasions, and we all got told off from time to time because of things we did or said. We were all a little fearful of him because we never knew when the next eruption would come. We had all come to have the dirt beaten out of us, in the same way that the dhobis clean clothes by smashing them on rocks. Maharaj smashed our egos, our minds and our concepts on the immovable rock of the Self because he knew that in most cases that was the only way to help us.

I told you a few minutes ago that Maharaj discounted all theories of reincarnation, but he did tell one story that possibly indicated that we had all been searching for God in India before. 'At the end of the Ramayana,' he said, 'all the animals who had helped Ram to win the war were given rewards. The monkeys were all told that they could go to a monkey heaven. Now, what is heaven to a monkey? Vast quantities of food, lots of fighting, and limitless sex. So, all the monkeys were reborn as human beings in the West in the twentieth century to experience their idea of "heaven". After some time, though, they all began to get bored of all this excess. One by one, they all started coming back to India because they wanted to find Ram and be with him again.'

Harriet: What did he shout at you for?
David: I remember one time trying to talk to him about effort. I think I was talking about the various efforts I had made to realise the Self. This was soon after I started going to see him. I didn't realise at the time that the word 'effort' was a no-no in that room. He really didn't like anyone using it. The idea that there was a person who did something to achieve some spiritual state was a complete anathema to him. He seemed to feel that it showed a complete lack of understanding of his teachings.

When he started to get annoyed with me for using the word, I just ploughed ahead, thinking innocently that he probably hadn't understood what I was trying to say. The more I attempted to describe my 'efforts' and justify them, the more annoyed he got with me. I ended up getting an earful about my wrong understanding and wrong attitude. I was quite taken aback at the time. I had never come across a teacher before who disparaged hard work and effort on the spiritual path. On the contrary, all the others I had encountered had heartily endorsed such activities. That's why I initially thought that there must have been some kind of misunderstanding. I realised later that when Maharaj spoke, he wasn't giving instructions that he wanted you to act on. He was simply telling you who and what you were. You were supposed to understand and experience what he was talking about, not turn it into a practice. Making a practice out of it simply confirmed for him that you hadn't really understood what he was saying. One question that always rubbed him up the wrong way was, 'Yes, Maharaj, I understand intellectually what you are saying, but what do I do to

actually experience it?' If you said that, you didn't understand him, or what he was trying to do, at all.

I have an embarrassing memory of another time he got angry with me. One afternoon my attention was wandering and my mind was embroiled in some larger-than-life ego fantasy. I was off in my own little world, not really listening to what was going on. Maharaj stopped the answer he was giving to someone else, apparently in mid-sentence, turned to me and started shouting at me, demanding to know whether I was listening and understanding what he was saying. I did a little prostration as an apology and put my attention back on what he was talking about. Afterwards, a few people wanted to know why he had suddenly launched such a ferocious attack on me. So far as they were concerned I was just sitting there minding my own business. I definitely deserved that one, though. In retrospect I can say that it increased both my attentiveness and my faith in him. When you know that the teacher in front of you is continuously monitoring all your thoughts and feelings, it makes you clean up your mental act quite a bit.

On another occasion, Maharaj got angry with me simply because one of the translators didn't understand what I had asked. I said that the previous day he had said one thing, whereas this morning he was saying what appeared to be the exact opposite. The translator somehow assumed I was criticising the quality of the translation on the previous day and passed on my critique to Maharaj. He really got angry with me over that, but that one just bounced off me because I realised immediately that it was all due to a misunderstanding. Someone eventually told the translator what I had actually said, and he apologised for all the trouble his comments had caused.

Harriet: Were the translators all good? I have been told that some were better than others.

David: Yes, there were good ones and not-so-good ones. I think everyone knew who was good and who was not, but that didn't result in the good ones being called on to do the work if they happened to be there. There seemed to be some process of seniority at work. The translators who had been there the longest were called on first, irrespective of ability, and those who might have done a better job would have to wait until these more senior devotees were absent. When I first went, a man called Sapre did most of the morning translations. He was very fluent and seemed to have a good grasp of Maharaj's teachings, but he interpolated a lot of his own stuff in his English answers. Two sentences from Maharaj might turn into a two-minute speech from Sapre. Even though most of us didn't know any Marathi, we knew that he must be making up a lot of his stuff simply because he was talking for so long. Several people complained to Maharaj about this, but he always supported Sapre and generally got angry with the people who complained about him. That was the cause of the outburst I just mentioned. Maharaj thought I was yet another person complaining about Sapre's translations.

Mullarpattan was next down the pecking order. I liked him because he was very literal. Possibly not quite as fluent as some of the others, but he scored points with me because he stuck to the script both ways. I once asked Maharaj a question through him, and when the answer came back, it made absolutely no sense at all. Mullarpattan, though, was beaming at me as if he had just delivered some great pearl of wisdom.

I thought about it again and it still made no sense, so I said, somewhat apologetically, 'I don't understand any of that answer. It doesn't make any sense to me at all.' 'I know,' replied Mullarpattan, 'it didn't make any sense to me either. But that's what Maharaj said and that's what I translated.' Somewhat relieved, I asked him to tell Maharaj that neither of us had understood what he had said and requested him to explain the topic a little differently. Then we got on with the conversation.

I really respected Mullarpattan for this. He didn't try to put some sense into the answer, and he didn't tell Maharaj that his answer didn't make any sense. He just translated the words for me in a literal way because those were the words that Maharaj had intended me to hear.

Right at the bottom, in terms of seniority anyway, was Ramesh Balsekar. He didn't come to see Maharaj until some point in 1978. I thought this was unfortunate because in my opinion, and in the opinion of many of the other foreigners there, he was by far the most skilful of all the translators. He had a good understanding of the way foreign minds worked and expressed themselves, and a good enough intellect and memory to remember and translate a five-minute rambling monologue from a visitor. He was so obviously the best, many of us would wait until it was his turn to translate. That meant there were occasionally some long, embarrassing silences when the other translators were on duty. Everyone was waiting for them to be absent so that Balsekar could translate for them.

All the translators had their own distinctive style and their own distinctive phrases. When I read Jean Dunne's books in the 1980s I was transported back into Maharaj's room because I would be hearing the words, not just reading them. I would look at a couple of lines, recognise Mullarpattan's style, or whoever else it happened to be, and from then on I would hear the words in my mind as if they were coming out of the translator's mouths.

Harriet: So all these books are simply a transcription of what the interpreter said on the day of the talk. They are not translations of the original Marathi?
David: I don't know about the other books, but I know that's what Jean did. For a couple of weeks I spent the afternoon in her flat, which was near Chowpatty Beach. On that particular visit, my own place was too far away, so I just slept there at night. Jean was doing transcriptions for Seeds of Consciousness at the time and she would occasionally ask for my help in understanding difficult words on the tape, or she would ask for an opinion on whether a particular dialogue was worth including. I know from watching her work and from reading her books later that she was working with the interpreter's words only.

Harriet: Did she ask Maharaj if she could do this work? How did she get this job?
David: From what I remember, it was the other way round. He asked her to start doing the work. This created a bit of resentment amongst some of the Marathi devotees, some of whom thought they had the rights to Maharaj's words. There was an organisation, a Kendra that had been set up in his name to promote him and his teachings, and certain members seemed a bit miffed that they had been left out of this decision. One of them came to the morning session and actually said to Maharaj that he (i.e. the visitor) alone had the right to publish Maharaj's words because he was the person in the Kendra who was responsible for such things. I thought that this was an absurd position to take: if you set up an organisation to promote the teachings of your Guru, and your Guru then appoints someone to bring out a

book of his teachings, the organisation should try to help not hinder the publication. Maharaj saw things the same way.

In his usual blunt way he said, 'I decide who publishes my teachings, not you. It's nothing to do with you. I have appointed this woman to do the job and you have no authority to veto that decision.' The man left and I never saw him again.

Harriet: Did you never feel tempted to write about Maharaj yourself? You seem to have written about all the other teachers you have been with.
David: On one of my early visits Maharaj asked me what work I did at Ramanasramam. I told him that I looked after the ashram's library and that I also did some book reviewing for the ashram's magazine.

He gave me a strong look and said, 'Why don't you write about the teachings?' I remember being a little surprised at the time because at that point of my life I hadn't written a single word about Ramana Maharshi or any other teacher. And what is more, I had never felt any interest or inclination in doing so. Maharaj was the first person to tell me that this was what I should be doing with my life. As for writing about Maharaj, the opportunity never really arose. In the years that I was visiting him, I wasn't doing any writing at all, and in the 80s and 90s I had lots of other projects and topics to occupy myself with.

Harriet: You have some good stories to tell, and some interesting interpretations of what you think Maharaj was trying to do with people. I am finding all this interesting, and I am sure other people would if you took the trouble to write it down.
David: Yes, as I have been talking about all these things today, a part of me has been saying, 'You should write this down'. The feeling has been growing as I have been talking to you. After you leave, maybe I will start and try to see how much I can remember.
Harriet: I suppose we should have talked about this much earlier, but how did you first come to hear of Maharaj, and what initially attracted you to him?
David: Sometime in 1977 I gave a book, Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism, by Chogyam Trunga, to a friend of mine, Murray Feldman, and said that he would probably enjoy reading it. I knew he had had a background in Buddhism and had done some Tibetan practices, so I assumed he would like it. He responded by giving me a copy of I am That, saying that he was sure that I would enjoy it. Murray had known about Maharaj for years and had even been to see him when Maurice Frydman was a regular visitor. I remember Murray's vivid description of the two of them together: two old men having intensely animated discussions during which they would both get so heated and excited, they would be having nose-to-nose arguments, with lots of raised voices and arm waving. He had no idea what they were talking about, but he could feel the passion from both sides. In those days, if you visited Maharaj, you were likely to be the only person there. You would get a cup of tea and a very serious one-on-one discussion, with no one else present.

A few years later I heard Maharaj say, 'I used to have a quiet life, but I am That has turned my house into a railway station platform'.

Anyway, back to the story. I am digressing before I have even started. I went through the book and I have to admit that I had some resistance to many of the things Maharaj said. I was living at Ramanasramam at the time and practicing Bhagavan's teachings. There were

clear similarities between what Maharaj was saying and what Bhagavan had taught, but I kept tripping over the dissimilarities: statements that the 'I am' was not ultimately real, for example. However, the book slowly grew on me, and by the end I was hooked. In retrospect I think I would say that the power that was inherent in the words somehow overcame my intellectual resistance to some of the ideas.

I went back to the book again and again. It seemed to draw me to itself, but whenever I picked it up, I found I couldn't read more than a few pages at a time. It was not that I found it boring, or that I disagreed with what it was saying. Rather, there was a feeling of satisfied satiation whenever I went through a few paragraphs. I would put the book down and let the words roll around inside me for a while. I wasn't thinking about them or trying to understand them or wondering if I agreed with them. The words were just there, at the forefront of my consciousness, demanding intense attention.

I think that it was the words and the teachings that initially fascinated me rather than the man himself because in the first few weeks after I read the book I don't recollect that I had a very strong urge to go to see him. However, all that changed when some of my friends and acquaintances started going to Bombay to sit with him. All of them, without exception, came back with glowing reports. And it wasn't just their reports that impressed me. Some of them came back looking absolutely transfigured. I remember an American woman called Pat who reappeared radiant, glowing with some inner light, after just a two-week visit.

Papaji used to tell a story about a German girl who went back to Germany and was met by her boyfriend at the airport. The boyfriend, who had never met Papaji and who had never been to India, prostrated full length on the airport floor at her feet. He told her afterwards, 'I couldn't help myself. You had undergone such an obvious illuminating transformation, I felt compelled to do it.'

I know how he felt. I never prostrated to any of the people who had come back from Bombay, but I could recognise the radical transformations that many of them had undergone. Even so, I think it was several months before I decided to go and see for myself what was going on in Bombay.

Harriet: What took so long? What made you wait?
David: Something has just surfaced in my memory, something I haven't thought about for years. After reading I am That a few times, I developed a great faith in Maharaj's state and power. I knew he was the real thing. I knew that if I went to see him I would accept any advice that he gave me. Around that time I heard reports that a couple of foreigners I knew had been to see him, and that he had advised them both to go back to their respective countries. This alarmed me a bit. I was very attached to being in Tiruvannamalai, and I definitely didn't want to go back to the West. Something inside me knew that if Maharaj told me to go back to England, I would go. I didn't want to leave India, so I held off going to see him for a few months.

There was another unresolved issue. I wasn't sure at that point whether or not I needed a human Guru. The Ramanasramam party line has always been that Bhagavan can be the Guru for everyone, even people who never met him while he was alive. I seem to remember having a knowledge of all the places in the Ramanasramam books and in I am That where

the subject of Gurus came up. I would read them quite often, without ever coming to a final conclusion about whether I needed a human Guru or not.

Harriet: So what made you finally overcome your resistance to going to Bombay?
David: An Australian woman, who had been before, suggested we go, and I agreed. I always knew I would go sooner or later. I just needed a push to get me going, and this invitation was it. I am trying to remember when it was. I think it was the middle of 1978, but I can't be more accurate than that.

Harriet: What were your first impressions? What happened when you arrived?
David: I remember sitting in his room, waiting for him to come upstairs. I was very nervous and apprehensive, but I can't remember why. I recollect trying to start a conversation with the man sitting next to me, but he asked me to be quiet so that he could meditate. Maharaj came in and a few minutes later I found myself sitting in front of him, telling him who I was and why I had come. It was an afternoon session and not many people were there. Since I was the only new person present, he called me up to find out who I was and what I wanted. I explained that I had come from Ramanasramam, that I had spent two years there, and that I had been practicing Bhagavan's teachings on self-enquiry fairly intensively. At this period of my life I often used to meditate eight hours a day, although by the time I met Maharaj this was beginning to tail off a bit.

Maharaj eventually asked me if I had any questions and I replied, 'Not now. I just want to sit and listen to you for a while.' He accepted this and allowed me to disappear to the back of the room. I should say at this point that I had already felt the power and the peace of his presence in the room. It was something very tangible.

Harriet: Did you go there with questions that you wanted to ask him? Was there anything that you wanted to talk to him about?
David: I really can't remember. I knew I would end up talking to him, but I didn't have any particular burning question.

Harriet: How long did it take for you to summon up the courage to start a dialogue with him?
David: I think it was the next day, in the afternoon session. That means I must have sat through two full sessions, just listening to what other people had to say, and to what Maharaj had to say to them. Eventually, when there was a lull in the conversation I asked, 'I have been doing self-enquiry, trying to keep attention on the inner feeling of "I", for several years, but no matter how intensively I try to do it, I don't find that my attention stays on the "I" for more than a few seconds. There doesn't seem to be an improvement in my ability to keep my attention on this inner feeling of "I". Do the periods of being aware of the "I" have to get longer and longer until they become more or less continuous?'
'No,' he replied, 'just having the strong urge to seek this "I" and investigate it is enough. Don't worry about how well or how long you are holding onto it. The strong desire to know the "I" will keep taking you back to it when your attention strays. If something is important to you, it keeps coming up in your mind. If knowing the "I" is important to you, you will find yourself going back to it again and again.'

After that I think I talked to him almost every day, mostly about various aspects of his teachings on consciousness. He seemed to encourage questions from me, and I always

enjoyed quizzing him. However, the exact details of the questions and answers seem to have slipped through the cracks of my memory.

Harriet: All this talk about Ramana Maharshi has reminded me of something else that I wanted to ask. We started off this afternoon with a question about why Maharaj isn't the topic of memoirs, at least book length ones. A few people have written short accounts, but I have never come across a full-length book about living with him. Many of the Ramana Maharshi books are filled with stories of miraculous events that seemed to be taking place around him. Many of his devotees tell stories of how faith in Bhagavan changed their lives or somehow, in an improbable way, transformed their destiny. I know that Bhagavan himself disowned all personal responsibility for these events, but that didn't stop people writing them down and attributing them to Bhagavan's grace. I suppose my question is, did similar things happen around Maharaj, and if they did, why did no one ever bother to write them down?
David: I don't know how common such events were, but I know that they did happen. And if similar things did happen to other people, I really don't know why those who know about these events don't want to write them down.

Let me redress the balance by telling one very long and very lovely story.

At some point in the late 1970s I was asked to take a South American woman called Anna-Marie to Bombay and look after her because she hardly spoke a word of English. Her native language was Spanish and I think she lived in Venezuela, but I have a vague memory that this wasn't her nationality. I was planning to go to Bombay anyway to see Maharaj, so I agreed to take her and look after her. Very early on in our journey, we were still in Madras. I realised that I had been given a bit of a basket case to look after. Anna-Marie was completely incapable of looking after herself, and was incredibly forgetful. Before we had even managed to get on the train to Bombay, she managed to lose all her money and her passport. By retracing our steps, we eventually tracked them down to a bookstore near the station. Miraculously, the manager had found the purse and had kept it with him in case we came back looking for it.

A few hours into our train journey from Madras to Bombay Anna-Marie went to the bathroom. On Indian trains that means a squat toilet which is just a hole in the floor with footrests on either side of it. Anna-Marie was sitting there, doing her business, when the train jolted on the tracks. Her glasses fell off and disappeared down the hole in the floor. It turned out to be her only pair, and without them she was more or less blind. I realised this later in the day when we stopped at a station further down the line. Anna-Marie was standing on the platform when the train started to pull out of the station. She made no move to get on. When I realised what was happening, I jumped off and pushed her onto the moving train. I had already realised that she was having trouble seeing things, but I didn't realise how bad things really were until I discovered that she couldn't see a moving train, with about twenty-five carriages, that was about ten feet in front of her. I knew that my first priority, once we got to Bombay, would be to get her a new pair of glasses. I remembered that there was an optician quite near to Maharaj's house. I had noticed it on previous trips while I was waiting to catch a bus to go downtown.

Early the next morning, as soon as the shop opened, I took her in to get her eyes tested and to get her some glasses. The test took a long time, partly because of Anna-Marie's

deficiency in English, and partly because the optician couldn't work out what her prescription was. After about half an hour he came out and said, 'She needs to go to a specialist eye hospital. I can't find out with my instruments here what her prescription might be. There is something seriously wrong with her eyes, but I don't know what it is. Take her to "Such and Such" Eye Hospital.'

Whatever the name was, I had never heard of it. He started to give me directions, but since I didn't know Bombay, I wasn't able to follow them. This was when the first 'miracle' of the day happened. It was to be the first of many.

'Don't worry,' said the optician, 'I'll take you there myself.'

He closed his store, there were no assistants to man the counter while we were away, and we set off on a walk across Bombay. We must have walked over a mile before we finally arrived at the hospital. He took us to the office of an eye surgeon he knew there and explained that his instruments were not sophisticated enough to work out what was wrong with Anna-Marie's eyes. He then left us and went back to his store. I have encountered many acts of kindness in all the years I have been in India, but I still marvel at this shop owner who closed down his store for a couple of hours and then went on a two-mile round-trip walk just to help us out.

The eye surgeon set to work on Anna-Marie's eyes. Even he was impressed by how complicated her eyes were. He tried her out on several machines and gadgets, but like the optician before him, he failed to come up with a prescription.

'What is wrong with this woman?' he asked. 'How did she end up with eyes like these?'

I shrugged my shoulders. 'I have no idea. I barely know her and she hardly speaks any English.'

We went off to a different part of the hospital that, to my untrained eye, seemed to have bigger and fancier machines. This new combination of equipment finally came up with a reading for Anna-Marie. Our curiosity had been piqued by this long complicated process so we tried through sign language and the few English words she knew to discover how Anna-Marie's eyes had come to be so peculiar. After a few false starts she realised what we were asking. It turned out that she had fallen out of a building in South America and had landed on her face. Having watched her behaviour and activities in the previous two days, I found this to be an entirely believable scenario. I don't think I have ever come across someone who was so accident-prone.

Her eyes had been damaged in the fall and had been stitched in various places. As a result of this surgery there were places on the eyeball that had a very eccentric curvature. This accounted for the first optician's inability to work out what she needed. Even the big eye hospital took almost an hour to figure out what she needed.

I got to talking to the eye surgeon and discovered that we had a mutual acquaintance in Tiruvannamalai. In fact, he knew quite a few of Bhagavan's devotees. Like the optician before him, he decided to take us under his wing.

'Where will you go to get this prescription fulfilled?' he asked.
'Well, the first man we went to, the one who brought us here, was very helpful to us. I would like to go back to him to give him the business since he was so kind to us.'

'No, no,' said the surgeon, 'he only has a little shop. He won't be able to fulfil an order like this. It is too complicated. I will take you to the biggest optician in Bombay.' He too closed down his office and took us on another trip across Bombay. As we walked through the front door of the store he was taking us to, everyone jumped to attention. He was clearly a very respected figure in the eye world. 'These are my friends,' he announced, waving at us. 'They have a difficult prescription to fulfil. Please do it as quickly as possible because this woman can't see anything without glasses. She is virtually blind.'

He left us in the hands of the manager of the store and went back to the hospital. The manager's big, beaming smile lasted as long as it took him to read the prescription. He put it down on the counter and started to talk to us very apologetically.

'Normally, we keep lenses for every possible prescription here in the store. We have a huge turnover, so we can afford to make and keep lenses that we have no customers for. Sooner or later somebody will come and buy them, and everyone appreciates the fact that they can get what they want on the spot, without having to wait for anything to be made. But this prescription is such a ridiculous combination, no one would ever think of making it or keeping it. Until I saw it myself I would have guessed that nobody in the world had eyes that corresponded with these numbers. We will have to make a special order and that will take a long time because the glass grinders are out on strike at the moment. Even if they go back to work, it will probably be weeks before we can get them to make an order like this because they already have a lot of pending orders. I'm sorry, I can't help you, and nobody else in the city will be able to help you either because this prescription is just too unusual for anyone to stock.'

This apology took about five minutes to deliver. While it was going on one of the boys from the store, who obviously didn't know any English, picked up the paper and went to the storeroom to look for the lenses. That was his job: to pick up the prescriptions from the front office and find the corresponding lenses in the storeroom. Just as the manager was coming to his conclusion, the boy reappeared with two lenses that exactly corresponded to the numbers on the prescription. The manager was absolutely flabbergasted.

'This is not possible,' he kept saying. 'No one would make and keep lenses like these.' He finally adjusted the impossibility by saying that someone must have ordered these lenses long ago and had forgotten to collect them.

Because we had been declared friends of the great and famous eye surgeon we had only known him for about two hours, we were given a massive discount and about half an hour later Anna-Marie walked out of the store wearing what I was absolutely convinced was the only pair of spectacles on planet earth that she could actually see the world through. Now, was there a miracle in there, or were we just the fortunate recipients of an amazingly serendipitous sequence of events?

'I' decided to pick the initial optician who agrees to close down his store and take us to the one eye surgeon in town who happens to be interested in Ramana, who then takes us, against my wishes, to the only store in Bombay where lenses can be found for Anna-Marie. I am a bit of a sceptic, and in my jaundiced opinion there are too many good things in that sequence to be attributed to chance alone.

My own belief is that when you go to the Guru, the power of that Guru takes care of any physical problems that may arise. He doesn't do it knowingly; there is just an aura around him that takes care of all these problems. We never even told Maharaj about Anna-Marie's glasses. When we set off that morning, I just assumed that she had fairly normal eyes and that within half an hour or so we would be able to buy some glasses that would bring the world into focus.

This was not the end of the story. I told you it was a long one. Anna-Marie was sitting with Maharaj every day for about a week, but of course, she couldn't understand a word of what was going on. There was no one there who spoke Spanish. Then, one morning, she appeared very red-eyed and I asked her what was the matter. 'I was up all night,' she said, in very broken English, 'praying for a Spanish translator to come today. There is something I have to tell Maharaj, and I need a translator to do it.'

Later that morning, as we were all sitting in a cafe in Grant Road in the interval between the end of the bhajans and the beginning of the question-and-answer session, we noticed a new foreign face at an adjoining table. A woman who was reading a copy of I am That. We introduced ourselves and discovered that, surprise, surprise, she was a professional Spanish-English translator who worked in Bombay and who had recently come across Maharaj's teachings. She had decided in a general sort of way to come and visit Maharaj, but only that morning did her general urge translate into positive action. Anna-Marie, of course, was over the moon. The translator she had spent all night praying for had miraculously manifested on the next table to her about fifteen minutes before the question-and-answer session started.

We all went back to Maharaj's room, curious to find out what Anna-Marie wanted to say to him. This is more or less what she had to say via the translator.

'I was living in Venezuela when I had a dream of a mountain and two men. I found out soon afterwards that one of the two men was Ramakrishna, but for a long time I didn't know who the other man was or what the mountain might be. Then, last year, I saw a photo of Ramana Maharshi and realised that this was the second man in the dream. When I did some research to find out more about him, I soon realised that the mountain in the dream was Arunachala. In the dream Ramana Maharshi looked at me in a very special way and transmitted knowledge of his teachings to me. He didn't do it verbally. He just looked at me, and as he was looking, I just felt that he was filling me up with an understanding of his teachings, a knowledge that I could articulate quite clearly, even though no words had passed between us. I knew that I had to come to India to find out more about him. I persuaded a friend of mine to bring me here, even though I knew that Ramana Maharshi was no longer alive. I knew I had some business here and something was compelling me to come. While I was in Tiruvannamalai I heard about you, and I knew that I had to come and see you as well. That same compulsion that made me come to India to find out about

Ramana Maharshi has made me come here as well. I don't know what it is, but I knew that I had to come.'

Maharaj interceded at this point: 'What were the teachings that were transmitted to you in the dream? What did Ramana Maharshi tell you as he was revealing his teachings in silence?'

Anna-Marie talked in Spanish for about five minutes without any translation being given by the interpreter. At the end of that period the translator began to explain what she had said. We all sat there, absolutely dumbfounded. She gave a perfect and fluent five-minute summary of Maharaj's teachings. They were quite clearly not Ramana's teachings but Maharaj's, and this woman was giving a wonderful presentation of them. I think it was one of the best five-minute summaries of the teachings I had ever heard. And remember, this was from a woman who was on her first visit, someone who had had very little acquaintance with Maharaj's teachings before coming there that day.

Maharaj seemed to be as impressed as everyone else there. He stood up, took Anna-Marie downstairs and initiated her into the mantra of his lineage by writing it on her tongue with his finger. I mentioned earlier that he would volunteer to give out the mantra if anybody wanted it. If someone asked for it, he would ordinarily whisper it in his or her ear. This is the only case I know in which he gave out the mantra without being first asked, and it is the only instance I know of in which he wrote it with his finger on a devotee's tongue. What does all this mean? I have absolutely no idea. I have long since given up trying to guess or rationalise why Gurus do the things they do.

Harriet: That's a great story! So you would say that Maharaj was looking after the welfare of devotees, in the same way that other great Gurus were?
David: I would answer a conditional 'yes' to that question. 'Yes' because it is the nature of enlightened beings to be like this ? they don't have any choice in the matter because these things go on around them automatically. However, on a more superficial level the answer might be 'no'. If people took their personal problems to him, he might get angry and say that it was none of his business. He didn't perceive himself as someone who dealt with individual people who had problems. I saw several people go to him to tell him that they had had all their money or their passport stolen, and his standard response was to tell them off for being careless. I told him once that I was worried about how much I was sleeping. At the time, though, I did think this was a legitimate spiritual question because I had read many teachers who had said that it was bad to sleep a lot.

His answer, though, was 'Why are you bringing your medical problems to me? If you think it is a problem, go and see a doctor.' In that particular case his advice turned out to be perfectly correct. I discovered later that I was suffering from a major infestation of hookworm, almost certainly as a result of walking around India for years with no footwear. Hookworms eat red blood cells and if they get out of control, they eat more than the body can produce. Eventually, you get very anaemic, which means feeling tired and sleepy all the time. So, in this particular case, what appeared to be a cranky, dismissive answer was the most useful thing he could say. I would say that the Self put the right words into his mouth at the right moment, but at the time neither of us knew just how right they were. Despite his generally irritable response when people went to him for personal help, I think he was fully aware that

he was looking after all his devotees' well being, even though it may not have looked that way a lot of the time.

Harriet: Again, can you give me an example of this, or is this just guesswork?
David: I remember a large fat man from Madras who came to see Maharaj with what he said was a problem: 'I have been doing japa for many years and I have acquired siddhis as a result. If I am very pleased with someone, very good things happen to him or her automatically. I don't think about it or do anything. It just happens by itself. But if I get angry with someone, the opposite happens. Very bad things happen, and sometimes the person even dies. How can I stop these things from happening?'

Maharaj told him, 'All these siddhis have come on account of your japa. If you stop dong the japa, the siddhis will also stop.'

'I don't think I can do that,' replied the man. 'The japa has taken me over so completely, it is no longer voluntary. It just happens by itself whether I want it to or not.'

Maharaj repeated his advice, but the man wasn't interested in carrying it out. He looked very pleased with himself and I got the feeling that he had just come there to show off his accomplishments. My opinion was confirmed when he announced that he was now willing to answer questions from anyone in the room. He hadn't come there to receive advice, he had come to give it out.

Maharaj asked him to leave and said that if he was really interested in his teachings he could go in the evening to the house of one of his women devotees, a Sanskrit professor who sometimes did translations for him, and she would explain them to him. He was told not to come back to the room. I suspect that Maharaj wanted to keep him away from us because there was something strange and threatening about him. I am not a very psychic kind of person but I could definitely feel an unpleasant energy coming off this man. It was something that made me feel physically queasy. He really did have an aura of bad energy around him. I checked with some of the other people afterwards, and some of them had felt the same way.

All this took place in a morning session. That evening the Sanskrit professor showed up an hour late, looking very flustered. Maharaj immediately wanted to know what was going on.

This man from Madras came to my house and I couldn't get him to leave. I told him that it was time for me to come here, but he wouldn't get up and go. I didn't really want to force him to go. He might have got angry with me, and then I might have died.'

Maharaj appeared to be outraged. He puffed out his chest like a fighting cock going into battle and announced, very angrily, 'No one can harm my devotees. You are under my protection. This man cannot do you any harm. If he comes to talk to you again, throw him out when it is time for you to come here. Nothing will happen to you.'

This was the only occasion when I heard Maharaj make a strong public declaration that he was protecting and looking after his devotees.

Maharaj himself had no fear of people like this. He told us once about a yogi who had come to his beedi shop to test his powers. This yogi apparently had many siddhis and he came to see if Maharaj, of whom he had heard great things, could match him. Maharaj just went about his business in the shop and refused all challenges to show off what he could do. Eventually, in an attempt to provoke him into doing something, the yogi said that he would curse him and make something very bad happen to him.

Maharaj apparently looked at him with complete unconcern and said, 'You may be able to pull down a thousand suns from the sky, but you can't harm me and you don't impress me. Now go away.'

Harriet: What about you? Were there any instances when you felt that he was looking after you, taking care of your physical well being as well as your spiritual health?
David: There is nothing remotely as spectacular as Anna-Marie's visit, but I can tell you the story of one trip I made to see him. There are a few incidents on the way that are nothing to do with what you are asking, but by the time I get to the end, you will realise what it is all about.

In 1980 I wanted to see Maharaj but I had no money at all. I couldn't afford the train ticket, and I definitely couldn't afford to stay in Bombay for more than a day or two. I accepted an invitation to give a talk about Bhagavan at a seminar in Delhi on condition that I could come back via Bombay. My train ticket was paid for by the organisers, so that took care of the transport arrangements. My meagre funds would allow me two days in Bombay, so I booked the tickets accordingly. In India you have to book your train tickets at least seven to ten days in advance in order to get the train you want.

I made my speech in Delhi and then took the train to Bombay. On the suburban train that ran from the main Bombay station to Grant Road I had all my money, my passport (actually a temporary travel document that was given to me while I waited for a new passport) and my onward train ticket stolen. It was a classic piece of work. There is always a crush as everyone piles into the carriage at the same time. In the general scrummaging someone managed to slit the bottom of my bag and remove my wallet. My first reaction was actually admiration. It had been such a slick, professional job. The slit was only about half an inch bigger than the size of the wallet, and the whole operation had been carried out in a couple of seconds while I was trying to ensure that I got onto the train.

Fortunately, my local train ticket was in my shirt pocket. In those days there was a Rs 10 fine (about 20 cents US at today's rate) for ticketless travel, and I wouldn't have been able to pay it if I had been unable to produce a ticket at my destination. When I arrived at Grant Road, I didn't even have that much money to my name. I think I had just over a rupee in loose change in one of my trouser pockets. That constituted my entire worldly wealth. I walked to 10th Lane, Khetwadi, the alley where Maharaj lived and invested all my change in a cup of tea and a morning newspaper. It was very early in the morning and I knew that it would be a couple of hours before anyone I knew showed up. I didn't want to go in and tell Maharaj that I had been robbed because I had seen how he had reacted to other people in that situation. I was hoping to float a loan from someone I knew and then find a floor to sleep on, because without a passport, I wouldn't be able to check into a hotel.

Jean Dunne showed up around the time I expected and I told her what had happened. I knew her well because she had lived in Ramanasramam for a couple of years before she started to visit Maharaj in Bombay. She lent me a few hundred rupees, which I assumed would be enough to have a couple of days in Bombay and get back to Tiruvannamalai. I planned to go to the train station later that morning and get a new copy of my onward ticket issued. Maharaj, though, had other plans for me.

Someone told him that I had been robbed on the suburban train and I braced myself for the expected lecture. Instead, he was astonishingly sympathetic. He spoke to one of his attendants, a bank officer, and asked him to put me up for the duration of my visit. I ended up in a very nice house in quite a good area of Bombay. Quite a change from the bug-ridden lodges that I usually had to frequent. Later that morning I went to V. T. Station to get a new ticket. Much to my amazement, there was no record of my name on any of the trains that were leaving for Madras. In those days there were no computers; all bookings were made by hand in big ledgers. A very civilised and sympathetic railway official (you don't meet many of them when you are not on Guru business in India!) took a couple of hours off to pore over all the ledgers to find out the details of my ticket. There are about 750 people on each train and I think there were three or four trains leaving for Madras on the day that I planned to leave. After scanning over 2,000 names for me, he regretfully announced that I didn't have a reservation on any of the trains that were leaving that day. I began to suspect that some power wanted me to stay in Bombay because mistakes like this are very rare in the railway booking system. In the twenty-seven years I have been using the trains here, I have never ever arrived at a station and discovered that my booked ticket simply didn't exist. I had no alternative except to go and buy a new ticket, which I did with the funds I had borrowed from Jean. The next train with a vacant berth wasn't leaving for over two weeks, which meant that I had that much time to spend with Maharaj.

I had come with very little money, expecting a two-day flying visit. Instead, courtesy of Maharaj and a mysterious event in the railway booking office, I had a luxurious two-week stay in a devotee's house.

I made my way back to Maharaj's house and found that someone had told him about the talk on Ramana Maharshi's teachings I had given in Delhi a few days earlier. That was something else that I wanted to keep quiet about. Maharaj had strong views on unenlightened people giving public speeches about enlightenment. I had only agreed to do it so that I would have a chance of coming to see him, but I suspected that this wouldn't be a good enough excuse for him.

I discovered that he had found out about the talk because when I walked into his room he called me and asked me to come to the front of the room. I went up and sat facing him in the place where the questioners would usually sit.

'No, no,' he said, 'sit next to me, facing all the other people.'

My spirits sank. I knew that I wouldn't enjoy whatever he had in mind.

'Look at my little room,' he began. 'Only about thirty people come to listen to hear me speak. But David here has just been giving spiritual talks in Delhi. Hundreds of people apparently

came to listen to him, so he must be much better at it than me. So today David will give a talk for us.'

This was worse than anything I could have imagined when he called me up. I tried unsuccessfully to wriggle out of his invitation, but when I realised that he wasn't going to back down, I gave a five-minute summary of the paper I had read out in Delhi. It was about the unity between the practices of surrender and self-enquiry in Bhagavan's teachings. One of the translators asked me to go slowly so that he could give a running translation for Maharaj. Through the duration of the talk Maharaj was glaring at me very intently. I think that he was waiting to pounce on me if I made some comment that he didn't agree with. I made it to the end of my summary without being interrupted by any scathing comments from Maharaj. I thought that this in itself was quite a major accomplishment.

After my conclusion he looked at me and said in a fairly mild tone, 'I can't quarrel with anything you said. Everything you said was correct.'

Then he fired himself up and said very strongly and forcefully, 'But don't go around giving talks about how to get enlightened unless you are in that state yourself. Otherwise, you will end up like that Wolter Keers.'

I have already told you what he thought of Wolter Keers and his teaching activities. That was a fate I was determined to avoid. All this took place twenty-three years ago. I haven't given a public talk since then.

I need to fast forward a bit here and get to the end of the story. I arrived back in Tiruvannamalai more than two weeks later. I had no income, no prospect of receiving any money from anyone, and I had a debt of several hundred rupees that I owed to Jean. I went to work the next morning in the ashram library and found an orange envelope on my desk with my name on it. I opened it and found a bundle of rupee notes inside. I counted them and discovered that it was exactly the same amount that had been stolen from me in Bombay: not a rupee more, not a rupee less. There was no mention of who had put the money there, and no one ever came forward to say that he or she was the person responsible. So far as I was aware, no one in Tiruvannamalai even knew about the theft. I hadn't told anyone, and I had been back in Tiruvannamalai less than twenty-four hours when the envelope appeared.

I think this whole episode was orchestrated by the power that looks after the affairs of devotees who have a strong urge to be with a Guru. This power took me to Bombay, stole my money and ticket, removed all traces of my booking from the railway ledgers, arranged excellent accommodation for me for more than two weeks, brought me back to Tiruvannamalai, where it then returned all my money to me via an anonymous donor.

Harriet: Where did you normally stay when you went to Bombay? What did other visiting devotees do for accommodation? Where did you all eat and sleep? I ask this because there was no ashram or centre where all of Maharaj's devotees could stay.
David: It depended on how well off you were. Bombay has always been an expensive place to live in. If you didn't have much money, your choice was very restricted. Some of my friends used to stay at a Buddhist ashram, but that involved participating in a lot of their

rituals, which was something many of us didn't want to do because some of the timings clashed with Maharaj's sessions. There were some other cheap options that were either a long way away or which also involved participating in some activity you didn't want to, or submitting to strange rules that were not convenient. I avoided all these places and always stayed at a cheap lodge that was about 200 yards from Maharaj's house, on the same alley. It was called the Poornima, and many of us who were short of money ended up there. I seem to remember that it was Rs 22 for a double room, an amazing price for Bombay even in those days. A couple of streets away there was a place that served cheap lunches to local people who were working in the area. It was made of mud and there were no chairs or tables. However, you could get a great lunch there ..chapattis, dhal, and vegetables for Rs 1.40. I can't remember the exchange rate in those days. I think it may have been about twelve rupees to the dollar. That should give you some idea of the prices.

Maharaj would always ask where you were staying when you first went to see him. If you said 'Poornima' he knew you were either short of funds or being very careful about spending them. He clearly approved of people who didn't waste money, and who got good bargains when they went out shopping. He had spent his whole life being a businessman who knew the value of a rupee, and it irked him considerably to see foreigners wasting money or getting cheated.

One morning when I was there visitors were offering flowers and sweets to him. People would bring flowers to decorate the portraits for the Guru puja that took place every morning, and some people brought sweets that would be distributed as prasad at the end of it. That day, three foreign women were standing in front of him with flowers that had stems, which meant that they were hoping he would put them in the vases that were kept near him. He asked the first one how much she had paid, and when she told him he was shocked. He got angry with her, said that she had been cheated, and refused to accept the flowers. The second woman suffered the same fate. The third woman's flowers were accepted because she had done a little bargaining and had got the price down to a reasonable amount. Devotion didn't seem to be a factor when it came to getting your flowers accepted. The best way to get your flowers in his vase was to bargain ferociously for them and get a price that would satisfy him.

Now the subject of flowers has come up, I have to digress a little, mentioning the bhajan and the Guru puja that took place between the meditation and the question-and-answer session. It was the only occasion when Maharaj would allow people to garland him. After he had been garlanded, he would stand in the middle of the room, banging cymbals to the tune of the bhajan that was being sung. Mostly, his eyes would be closed. At the beginning he would start off with small finger cymbals one or two inches in diameter. As the bhajan heated up he would move on to bigger and bigger cymbals which would be passed on to him by an attendant. The biggest pair were almost the size of garbage can lids. They were huge and the noise they made was ear-splitting. You could hear them several streets away. When Maharaj moved on to this biggest set of cymbals, he would already be wearing so many garlands, they would be sticking out in front of him, sometimes to a distance of about two feet. It wasn't possible to bang the biggest cymbals without utterly destroying the garlands. Maharaj would bang away with his eyes closed, and every time the cymbals came together petals would fly off in all directions. By the time it was all over, the floor would be covered with fragments of the flowers he had shattered and sprayed all over the room. It was a

beautiful sight and I never got tired of watching him smash his cymbals together and spray flowers in all directions.

Let's get back to his parsimonious habits. I stayed at Poornima on a visit I made in 1979. I was spending two weeks with Maharaj before flying back to England to visit my family for the first time since I had come to India in 1976. My mother had sent me a ticket, feeling, possibly with some reason, that if she didn't pay for my trip, I might never come home again. I had accumulated orders for copies of I am That from friends in England. The British price was about ten times the price of the Bombay price, so all the Maharaj devotees I knew in England had put in orders for cheap copies. I appeared in Maharaj's room with this huge pile of books and asked him to sign them all for the people who were waiting for them in England.

He looked at me very suspiciously and said, 'I thought you had no money. How could you afford to buy all these books?'

I explained: 'They are not for me. They are for people in England who don't want to pay the British price. They have sent me money to bring them Indian copies.'

When I told him the retail price in London he was truly horrified. “Take as many as you can! No one should pay that price for a book!” He pulled out his pen and happily autographed all the books.

Harriet: Did you carry on going to see him until he passed away? Were you there in the final days?
David: No, and I didn't want to be. I didn't want to sit there watching him slowly die. I wanted to keep my memory of a man who was a perpetual dynamo, an amazingly vital centre of force and energy. I knew that he didn't regard himself as the body, but I didn't want to be there, watching the cancer slowly reduce him to an invalid. I can't remember the date of my last visit, but I do remember that he was still talking without much trouble.

I haven't explained how Maharaj kept the traffic flowing through his room. You need to know about this to understand what comes after. Because of the restricted space available, Maharaj would generally only allow people to spend about two weeks with him. New people were coming every day and there simply wasn't enough room for everyone to sit on the floor.

When Maharaj saw that it was getting congested, he would pick out a few of the people who had been there the longest and ask them to leave, saying, 'You can leave now. New people have come and there is no room.'

The selected people would then have to leave, but if they were still interested, they could come back after another couple of months and put in another two weeks there. That was the system that many of us followed: two weeks there followed by two or more months somewhere else. Usually, when I arrived, I would tell him that I had a return ticket to Madras in two weeks' time. He trusted me to leave on the appointed day.

On my final visit, though, I have a memory that I was trying to stay few days longer than I had originally intended. I do remember that for a couple of days I would sit in a back corner,

hoping he wouldn't notice me, because he knew that my time was up. One morning I couldn't get to my corner seat in time because something delayed me. I found myself sitting quite close to him, effectively blocking his view of some of the people who were immediately behind me. I should mention that I am 6'2? and that my back is disproportionately long for my size. I have short legs and a long back, which means that when I sit on the floor with a straight back the top of my head is the same distance from the floor as someone who is about 6'4?. Of course, on that particular morning Maharaj wanted to have a conversation with the person who was sitting immediately behind me, someone who was a lot shorter than I was. I tried unsuccessfully to squirm out of the way, and Maharaj tried to peer round me but it was no use because there wasn't any extra floor space for me to manoeuvre in. We were packed in like sardines in a can.

Eventually Maharaj looked at me and said, with some irritation, 'Why are you still sitting here taking up floor space? I can't see the people behind you. You are full of knowledge. You are so full of the knowledge it is coming out of your ears and making a mess on my carpet. You can go now and make space for other people.'

That was the last time he spoke to me. I took his irascible remarks to be a blessing and a benediction, a sort of graduation certificate. I left that day and never went back.

Over the next few months I kept receiving reports about his failing health but I never felt tempted to go back one more time. That is, until he suddenly appeared in one of my dreams telling me to come and see him. It was such a forceful dream, it woke me up. I lay there in my bed, wondering if it really was him telling me to come, or whether it was just my subconscious manifesting a secret wish to go and see him one more time. I fell asleep without resolving the issue one way or the other.

A few minutes later he reappeared in my next dream, glaring at me: 'I just told you to come. Why didn't you believe me?'

I woke up and knew that he wanted me to come. Maybe he wanted one last chance to assault my stubborn ego. I didn't go and I can't give any satisfactory excuses for my refusal to respond to this dream. This was just before he passed away in 1981. I could give any number of reasons, but none of them rings true to me or satisfies me. When I study my memory of this event, I can't find any excuses that will pass muster in my conscience. I didn't go, and to this day I can't remember what stopped me.

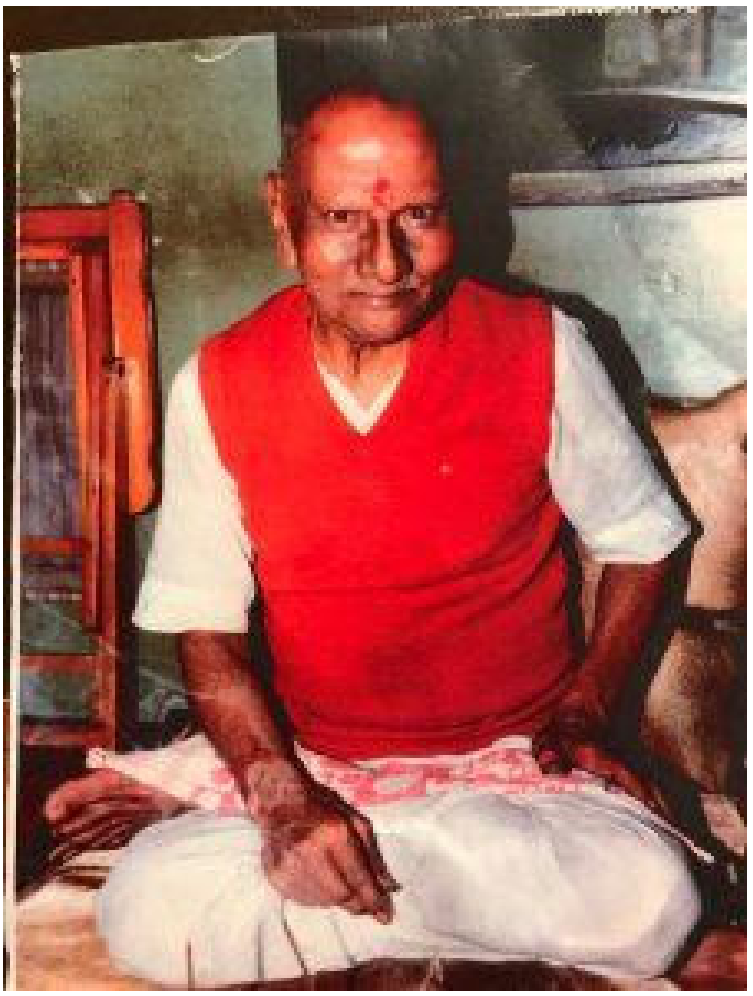
Harriet: Did the dreams continue? Did he ask you to come again?
David: No, it was only on that one night. However, after he did die I started to have vivid and regular dreams in which I was visiting him in his room. I would go up the steps and find him there, sitting in his usual seat, and giving out teachings in his usual way. My dream logic would try to work out why he was still there, still teaching. In the dream one part of me knew that he had died, but another part was witnessing him still alive, still teaching in his usual corner. In these dreams I would sometimes come to the conclusion that he hadn't really died at all, that he had faked his death, waited until all the crowds had left, and then gone back to teaching with a small group of people who were somehow in on the game. My dream brain invented all kinds of stories such as these, but even in the dreams they never really convinced me. I knew something was wrong, but I couldn't quite figure out what it was.

These dreams went on all through the 1980s and well into the 1990s. The last dream in this sequence was different. I found Maharaj teaching a small group of people inside the main room of the Ramanasramam dispensary. This was unusual because I had never before dreamed of him anywhere outside his room. Also, the people were different. They were not the Indian faces who populated his room in the earlier dreams. They were all foreigners, all people I knew well. This time there was no doubt, no confusion about why or whether he was still alive.

I looked at Maharaj, turned to my friends who were sitting on the floor with him and said, with a great feeling of exaltation, 'See! I told you! He's alive! He didn't die at all! He's still alive!'

The dream ended and I have never dreamt of him again.

Harriet: What did you make of all this? What did it all mean for you?
David: I don't need Freud on this one. He didn't die because he was never born. He is alive as the Self within me. He can't die. He is inside, biding his time, waiting for the words he planted there to destroy me and my little, circumscribed world. I know that he hasn't given up on me, and I also know that one day he will prevail.



ॐ स॒ह ना॑ ववतु । स॒ह नौ॑ भुनक्तु । स॒ह वी॒र्यं॑ करवावहै । ते॒ज॒स्विना॒वधी॑तमस्तु॒ मा वि॑द्विषा॒वहै ॥ **(3)**
ॐ शान्ति॒: शान्ति॒: शान्ति॑: ॥ **(3)**